

Gujarat University Publication

*Talks on*

# VEDANT IN PRESENT LIFE

*by*

**Swami Vidadatmanandaji**



**Gujarat University**

**Ahmedabad-380 009.**



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Gujarat University Publication

(Shri Chhaganlal Gopalji Solanki  
Shāṅkar Darshan Lecture Series)

*Talks on*

# VEDĀNTA IN PRESENT LIFE

(Under the auspices of the Board of  
Extramural Studies)

(Dt. 16-1-1982 To 18-1-1982)

by

Swami Vidadatmanandaji



Gujarat University  
Ahmedabad-380 009

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## FOREWORD

It was, indeed, our great good fortune that we have had Swami Veditatmanandaji to address our teachers and students as also the members of the general public through his learned discourses on "Vedānta in Present Life" arranged under the Gujarat University's Scheme of Shri Chhaganlal Gopalji Solanki Trust Shāṅkar Darshan Lecture Series for the year 1982. It was a thoroughly pleasurable experience to listen to Swamiji expose with his deep study, profound and characteristic charm.

I am, deeply grateful to Swamiji for making these discourses available also to his countless admirers and other scholars who could not attend them on dt. 16-1-1982 through 18-1-1982. Those, of course, who did attend will, I have no doubt, welcome any opportunity to peruse these lectures and have them "flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude".

I am also sure that students and teachers and all those interested in Philosophy in general alike will find the publication a most welcome addition to our none too plenty but precious literature in English in the field.

Gujarat University  
Ahmedabad-380 009  
Dt. 16-6-1984

S. V. Shastri  
Registrar

# FORWARDED

It was indeed, our great good fortune that we have had Swamiji's understanding to address our teachers and students as also the members of the general public through his recorded discourses on "Science in Present Life" arranged under the Rajawade University Scheme of Sri Changanassery. Swamiji's first lecture in the Lecture Series for the year 1982, it was a thoroughly pleasurable experience to listen to Swamiji expose with his deep study, research and characteristic charm.

I am, deeply grateful to Swamiji for making these discourses available also to his country's administrators and other scholars who could not attend them on 6th to 7th 1982 (March 1982-1983). Therefore, (course, who did attend will) have no doubt, believe my opportunity to peruse these lectures and have them filed upon that forward eye which is the basis of scholarship.

I am also sure that students and scholars and all those interested in philosophy in general will find the publication a welcome addition to our home too surely for previous literature in English in the field.

S. V. Srinivasan  
Registrar

Changanassery University  
Changanassery-586002  
Tel. 16-1094

## PREFACE

Swami Vidadatmanandaji, Ācārya, Adhyātma Vidyā Mandir, is very well known to Ahmedabad and also to Gujarat University in particular. Spending all the time and energy in tirelessly spreading the Knowledge for the benefit of people, with ever smiling face and loving eyes, Swamiji ably explores the subject dealt with and very artfully brings home the points to the hearts of the listeners. Swamiji effortlessly reveals the profound truths of Vedānta, hitting the mark, sometimes in colloquial language and often in scientific language; thus touching the minds of the listeners who even unconsciously start following the vision of the scriptures. Swamiji is an embodiment of love and purity, possessing a firm conviction born of Knowledge.

Gujarat University organised three talks by Swamiji, during January 16-18, 1982, under the auspices of Shri Chhaganlal Gopalji Shāṅkar Darshan Lecture Series. The topic was "Relevance of Śāṅkara Vedānta in present practical life". Life, irrespective of age is a constant quest of happiness. What is sought after by every human being—every living being for that matter—is happiness free from the limitations of time, space and objectivity. Man being a rational animal has been employing his intellect in searching happiness but somehow the very search for happiness seems to be making him unhappy and uneasy. What is the reason? Where and how can one really attain the limitless happiness? And what is the limitless happiness when translated into practical life?

This small book addresses itself to all these questions of our heart and answers them to our satisfaction. Vedānta reveals the nature of Brahman, the goal of life and so it is not only relevant but it is the only thing that is relevant in our practical life. In these three talks Swamiji clearly presents how that limitless happiness is the goal of human life, which is no different from Brahman, the Satya, and with proper understanding of Mithyā Jagat when a

seeker of Truth implements the values of life, he attains the limitless, his life gets fulfilled.

We are glad that Gujarat University is publishing these talks. The talks were recorded, transcribed and edited by Adhyātma Vidya Mandir at Ahmedabad and are being presented in the form of this booklet. We hope it would help the students of Vedānta gain an insight into the life.

Adhyatma Vidya Mandir  
Ahmedabad.



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1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

## I. Vedānta in Present Life

### Śāṅkara Vedānta

We like to clarify a few things before we proceed with the topic under discussion, viz. Relevance of Śāṅkara Vedānta in present practical life. A certain lack of understanding and even misunderstanding prevails with regard to what is meant by Vedānta.\* According to one meaning of the term Anta, Vedānta means the physical end of the Vedas, our sacred scriptures. So Upaniṣads, physically appearing at the end of the Vedas make up Vedānta.

But in Sanskrit the word Anta also has some other meaning. Anta means the vision, as it is used in Bhagavad Gita,

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः । म.गी. २, १६

(The truth (अन्तः) about both of these has been seen by the knowers of the truth.) Thus Vedānta means the vision of the Vedas.

The culmination of Vedas is also called Vedānta. The word Veda comes from the Sanskrit root Vid meaning to know. So Veda means a body of knowledge. The word is generally used to refer to the body of knowledge found in the ancient Indian literature. But it could mean any knowledge. Any book of knowledge could be called Veda according to this derivation of the term. Therefore, the culmination of any form of knowledge, the most exalted knowledge, where all the seeking for knowledge finds its end, could also be called Vedānta.

To site an example of what the Upaniṣads (Vedānta) deal with, here is an incident from Muṇḍakopaniṣad : the student of this Upaniṣad approaches the teacher in proper manner and asks this question, कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवति ।

(O Revered Sir! What is that, knowing which everything becomes known?) The Upaniṣad, which is an answer to this question,

\* The term Vedānta is made up of two words: Veda and Anta. वेदानाम् अन्तः वेदान्तः।

describes that, knowing which everything as well becomes known. Thus the pursuit of knowledge comes to an end or it culminates when this knowledge called Vedānta is gained.

So Vedānta is the knowledge; it is a vision and not a particular mode of life or a particular religion. It is also not a set of values. It is not a mode of life but it is the vision of life. It is the vision of the truth. This is the fundamental thing about Vedānta.

Vedānta is the universal vision of life. It is the vision of the Truth and Truth is that which is universally applicable. That alone is called the Truth or Satya which remains the same and is equally applicable everywhere; whether it is in India or in United States, in the forest or in the Himālayas, in the ancient times or in the modern era. It does not change with the change in conditions and circumstances. This is called universality. Thus Truth is that which remains the same at all the times, at all the places, under all the conditions.

Vedānta is the knowledge or the vision of this Truth. And therefore it is universally applicable to all, at all times, under all situations. It is not any one's private property, neither of Vedas nor of Upaniṣads. By the word Vedānta we do not even mean the body of the words called Vedas. While discussing what is meant by Vedānta or the knowledge of Brahman, Śaṅkarācārya himself says that the knowledge of Vedānta is not merely the body of the words but it is the appreciation or the vision that these words give rise to. Therefore Vedānta does not mean any particular book but it is the Knowledge and therefore it is universal. Otherwise it could have been confined to certain people, to a certain place and to a certain mode of life. Vedānta being universal is equally applicable to everybody, to every living being as a matter of fact. And that alone is the reason why we are interested in knowing it.

There is no such thing as Śaṅkara Vedānta, for as was said before Vedānta is not a private property of any individual. Since a lot of opinions exist pertaining to the vision of the Upaniṣads, the vision propounded by Śaṅkarācārya is known as Śaṅkara Vedānta. But it is not his personal opinion. It is what the Upaniṣads

reveal. We will therefore use the word Vedānta instead of Sāṅkara Vedānta.

With this much introduction to the word Vedānta, we will proceed to see whether this truth or universal vision has any relevance to our present practical life. If Vedānta has nothing to do with our day to day life, the discussion undertaken would be merely academic. So before undertaking the study of Vedānta, the question that we would want to answer is whether it has anything to do with our day to day life, whether it is, in any way, connected or relevant to me. It is nice to know the theory of relativity or the Chinese language, but I need not necessarily know them. If I know them, well and good. But if I do not know them, they do not in any way, affect my life. Is Vedānta that kind of a knowledge? Or is it the knowledge that I have got to know? This is what we call relevance. Whether it is important for human beings or not would decide its relevance in life. So we have to examine first whether this truth has any relevance in our life, has any role to play in our life.

### Life—a series of actions

The question pertaining to its relevance in life rests on what we mean by the word life. Unless we are clear about these terms, there could be a lot of confusion. What do we associate the word life with? Life means sentiency. It means activity. When do we say this man is alive? When he is active. Therefore life may be defined as a series of actions or as a series of experiences. If there is no action, there is no experience. Then there is no life. Life is a series of actions and this is what we find common to all human beings. It is common to all living beings. Action cannot be avoided by anyone at any time. This is what the Lord says in Bhagavad Gita.

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

(Verily, none can ever remain, even for a moment, without performing action.) Why is it so? Lord Himself answers in the second line of the same verse :

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः । भ. गी. ३, ५

(Everyone is made to act helplessly indeed by the qualities born of Prakṛti.) Everybody is made to act, as though helplessly, by some force or some factor. There is some factor which constantly propels one to act. That is the reason why we find every living being persistently acting. Even if the man is physically not doing any action, mentally he is very active. I might think that during meditation I am inactive, but I am not really so. In fact the activity is more intense at such moments. Thus action here means either physical action or mental action.

### Seeking happiness

When we want to know what is meant by life, our enquiry comes down to know what an action is, how and why it takes place. Since life is a series of actions, if we understand one action, we will be able to understand the whole life. If we look within, we find that we are constantly prompted to perform an action by something within called desire. It prompts us to do one thing or the other, to go from one place to another. That is why we see people constantly moving; changing places, situations and conditions. Man constantly acts. He constantly moves. To understand the nature of an action, we have to understand the nature of this desire, which prompts man to act.

When a person is at home in the morning, he entertains the desire of going to the office. While in the office, the only desire that occupies his mind is to go home. The moment he reaches his office on Monday the desire is to enjoy a holiday or a Sunday at home. When the holiday comes, he plans to go out. Man does not seem to be satisfied with what he has. He cannot relax or sit quietly. Therefore when the holiday or the day of relaxation comes, people plan for different outings, visits, cinemas etc. In and through every action there is a desire to get something which I do not seem to have at the moment.

That something goes by the name of happiness. I want to go to a cinema, so that I can be happy. I want to go to work in order to be happy. What makes a man happy may differ from person to person. What makes me happy, may make you miserable.

In the train, in the same compartment, some who are smoking are absolutely in ecstasy. They are in heaven. But some others are miserable. What made me happy in the past may not do so now. So what makes me happy keeps on changing but the fact that I want to be happy remains. Thus every human being : every living being wants to be happy. For what does a mosquito sit on my hand ? For sucking the blood. It gives it happiness. No one wants to be in an unhappy condition. The moment the mosquito finds that my hand is going to land on it, it flies away.

Thus what a man tries to do in and through all the actions is to seek happiness and avoid unhappiness. The desire to attain happiness and to avoid unhappiness constantly keeps one engaged, doing something or the other. Were this basic desire not there, there would have been no action. There would have been no life. Vedānta is bold enough to say that the only reason why life is there in the universe, or the only thing that sustains the universe, is this basic urge in the heart of every living being; seeking happiness (सुखप्राप्ति) and avoiding unhappiness (दुःखनिवृत्ति). Is there a third kind of an activity ? Is there any motive other than these two ? Examine every action of yours and see whether it falls under one of these two categories or not. Any action, ancient or modern, whether it is done by the greatest scientist or by a sweeper, is prompted by one of these two motives. Therefore attainment of happiness is essentially what we mean by life.

Our enquiry is thus becoming subtler as we proceed. The field of enquiry is becoming more and more narrow. Instead of saying 'relevance of Vedānta in life', now we have to say 'relevance of Vedānta in the quest of happiness.' Now the question is, does the knowledge of the truth or the study of Vedānta have anything to do with this quest in life ? This quest is the same irrespective of time. We have not yet discovered any real difference between ancient and modern life. We must understand as to what is modern and what is ancient. The following incident illustrates this :

Once Svāmiji was invited for dinner. The hostess happened to be a very modern lady. The dining table was set up very well.

The plates were laid out. The food was served. With all the plates there were different types of spoons and forks and knives. Before she began to eat, the hostess took the Parāthā and with two hands she tore it into several pieces. Then she took a napkin, wiped the hands clean and started her dinner. She took the knife and the fork, picked up a piece of Parāthā; dipped it in Dāl and ate it! This is the modern way of eating. It is the same Parāthā which has been made from the same flour as it was made in the olden days but the style of eating has changed. We have the satisfaction of eating with knife and fork and so we do accept that there is something modern in life. What is modern? That instead of fingers we are using knife and fork is modern. But still there also is something ancient in the so called modern way. The food, the Parāthā is ancient. That we eat food only through the mouth is also ancient! Thus a lot of modern things may have come along in life but there are certain things that remain the same. They are ancient.

Based on this knowledge, is the urge for attaining happiness and avoiding unhappiness ancient or modern? The ancient man also sought the very same thing. He wanted to live in the cave because he was seeking happiness. He was insecure and uncomfortable outside. For security, comfort and happiness alone, he developed different weapons. Comparing the modern man with the ancient man, we find that the way of dressing, talking and behaving is different but the basic desire of attaining happiness and avoiding unhappiness as the motivating force behind remains the same in both the cases. Ancient and modern are in time. But this basic problem transcends the time. The Vedas are ancient but they deal with the problem that is common to all the times. That is the reason why our Vedic knowledge or the Dharma propounded by our scriptures is called Sanātana Dharma. Otherwise the Upaniṣads, the ancient scriptures would have been of no use to us.

What relevance does Bhāgavad Gita have in our lives? It is addressed to Arjuna in a particular situation. Though this is the case, it applies to all people at all times and all places because it



deals with the fundamental desire of human beings; i.e. gaining happiness and avoiding unhappiness. As Vedānta addresses itself to this fundamental problem it becomes relevant even today. It suggests a solution to this problem which is applicable at all times, in all places and under all conditions. This is called Satya or Truth.

Am I interested in solving this particular problem of life ? Am I interested in fulfilling the basic urge of being happy ? Yes, because man has no choice. He cannot stand sorrow. He loves happiness and so Vedānta is relevant. Since every man, knowingly or unknowingly, is interested only in this one thing in life, happiness, Vedānta becomes relevant to every one.

## II. Brahma Satyam

Now we have to examine in what manner is the knowledge of Vedānta universal or Satya. Since we are talking about Śāṅkara Vedānta we shall base our discussion on a very famous verse of Śāṅkarācārya where he sums up the entire vision of Vedānta.

श्लोकादेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ।  
ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥

(In half a verse I am going to tell you that which is expressed by innumerable texts. It is that, Brahman is Real and the world is unreal and the Jiva is Brahman and none other.)

The first half of this verse is an introduction to the second half. What is that he wants to state ? Brahman is the Truth or the Reality and Jagat or the creation is unreal or Mithyā. The Jiva or the limited individual is Brahman, the limitless and there is no separation between them.

If this is the vision of Vedānta we should understand what is real and what is unreal. We should know this because our life is a mixture of the real and the unreal. Every experience is a blend of these two aspects. It seems that man is confronted with these two aspects simultaneously at all the times. In every experience, if I know what is real and what is unreal, I have gained the vision of Vedānta, I have fulfilled the purpose of my life. So Vedānta is the knowledge of the Truth or the vision of life. It is not a mode of life or any particular experience. For this we shall have to understand the technical terms 'real' and 'unreal' or Satya and Mithyā.

### Four Puruṣārthas

Once again we come back to the fundamental desire of attaining happiness and avoiding unhappiness. Man constantly attempts to fulfil this desire. This quest for happiness in and through all the

pursuits is known as Puruṣārtha\* in our scriptures. Considering all the things that a man tries to gain in life, we can classify this Puruṣārtha in four categories: Artha, Kāma, Dharma and Mokṣa.

**Artha (अर्थ) – Yoga (योग) and Kṣema (क्षेम)**

The first thing that I want in life is food, clothing and shelter; the basic necessities of life. Food is the first requirement of man. To fill the stomach is a fundamental requirement of life. Nobody is opposed to that and it would be foolish to deny it. We must know that Vedānta deals with the facts of life and therefore no experience of our life can be rejected. We are only trying to understand the experiences, not reject any experience. Just as a man requires food, he also requires clothes and shelter to protect him. This is one class of requirements of human beings. On it, many trades thrive and industries flourish. The whole of the Insurance business would be out of operation if this fundamental urge were not there. 'योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्' the Life Insurance Corporation says in its emblem which depicts a lamp protected between two hands. This is the statement from Bhagavad Gita where the Lord assures, "I am the one who looks after the Yoga† and Kṣema‡ of everyone in the creation."

Man wants to acquire the various things that he does not possess (Yoga) and wants to protect them (Kṣema). When we acquire a telephone the desire is to have S.T.D. After gaining this facility, there arises an anxiety to protect it so that it is not misused! Hence we keep the telephone locked. So Yoga and Kṣema are the two fundamental requirements which are reflected in various actions of every human being.

**Kāma (काम)**

It is not that by fulfilling the basic requirements of life, viz. food, clothing and shelter or Yoga and Kṣema, there remains nothing

\* पुरुषैः अर्च्यते इति पुरुषार्थः । That which is sought after by men, that which is desired by men, is called Puruṣārtha.

† योगः प्राप्तस्य प्राप्तिः attainment of what I do not have.

‡ क्षेमः प्राप्तस्य रक्षणम् protection of what I have.

more to be gained in life. Provide a man with these basic requirements and ask him, 'Are you happy now? Do you have everything that you need?' He will say, 'No. I'm planning to go to the Himālayas for mountaineering.' Why should he have to go for mountaineering and undergo all sorts of troubles and strains when all comforts are available at home? When he had no house, he worked hard and fought his way to get one. Now when he possesses it, he wants to go out. Why does a man want to leave his house and seek different enjoyments?

This is because when the physical requirements are satisfied, there arises the requirement of the mind. This is called Kāma, a desire for happiness.

### **Dharma (धर्म)**

In the beginning, a man seeks happiness at the level of the body—the grossest expression of the fundamental urge of seeking happiness and avoiding unhappiness. The second level of requirement is Kāma, means enjoyment or pleasure at the mental level. If we provide both of these to a man and ask him whether he is happy or not we will find that he is still not content. What does he want now? Now he wants to be a minister. He wants power and position, name and fame, respect and recognition. And for this he is ready to sacrifice all the physical comforts and the mental pleasures.

When the stomach is empty, man does not mind eating anything to satisfy his hunger; he eats even a dry, stale bread! Because the basic urge of gaining happiness gets first expressed at the level of the body, then at the level of the mind and lastly at the level of the intellect. This is common to all human beings.

Life is a pursuit of happiness at these three levels of body, mind and intellect which are respectively called Artha, Kāma and Dharma.

### **Brahman, the limitless happiness**

So far, we have not had the necessity of God. Satya or truth has not been necessary in life. If I want to fill my belly, I don't require God. I can go to a farm, raise the crops, cook and eat. Where is the truth or Satya required? For entertainment, I need

cinemas, parks etc. I do not require God. If I want power, position and fame, I do not require God. So long as life is confined to these three things we need not worry about Satya or God. People like Duryodhana, who consider life to be the fulfillment of these three requirements have nothing to do with God. यावज्जीवेत् सुखं जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् । 'As long as a man lives, may he live happily. If necessary, borrow money but drink Ghee' is the philosophy of life for these people. As long as you live, live happily and eat well. In case you don't have money, beg, borrow or steal but make merry.

This kind of philosophy for leading life has been there at all time. But we have to examine whether it is possible for us to confine ourselves merely to the pursuits of Artha, Kāma and Dharma. If a man could really be happy by enjoying different objects and comforts; by entertaining himself in various ways; and by attaining power and position; if he stopped seeking happiness and found himself to be content, we would have to say that that alone is the goal of life. Then all we have to do is to try to provide these things to everybody. But it is our experience that in spite of attaining all these in life, man still wants something better, something superior. He does not know what he wants but he is not happy with what he has. Even a man in the most important position is not satisfied or content.

One may think that when happiness is acquired all the seeking would stop. But that is not the case. The moment some form of happiness is acquired, it prompts me to perform action. I want to hold on to it. And when unhappiness comes, I want to get rid of it. So both happiness and unhappiness prompt a new series of actions. All the enjoyments in the world are not enough; all the power and position, name and fame are not enough to satisfy me. Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita as though supports this when he says :

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्  
यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम् ।

अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं

राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम् ॥ भ. गी. २-८ ॥

• (I do not see that it would remove this sorrow that burns up my senses, even if I should attain prosperous and unrivalled dominion on the earth, or even lordship over the Gods.)

Arjuna seems to say, 'I want the end of this very seeking. I want a situation where I do not need anything. I have been a beggar all through my life, now begging money, then begging joy and then power and so on. But I don't seem to be satisfied. I want to eradicate this beggar in me.'

Not only Arjuna says this; every one of us has the same thing to say. It seems that our begging bowl is bottomless. Whatever we add doesn't seem to fill it. It shows that what we want is something very special and that whatever is added in our begging bowl doesn't seem to be what we want. We want happiness. How much happiness do we want? Can we quantify the happiness? No. How long do we want to be happy? We always want to be happy. Not even for a moment do we want unhappiness; afternoon, evening, today, tomorrow or day after; every day, every moment we want to be happy. What else? At all the places we want to be happy. Here, there, everywhere. Wherever we go, we must be happy. Under all the conditions we must be happy. Whether with people around or without them, in the forest or in the market place, at any place and every place we want to remain happy and therefore the happiness we want is not the happiness ordinarily available. We want happiness that is not limited by time, place or condition. Man wants limitless happiness. What he is begging with his begging bowl is limitless happiness.

What is meant by 'limitless'? It is the happiness which is not limited by time. It should be available at all the times. It is the happiness not confined to any one place but available at all the places. It is the happiness which is not confined to a certain set of conditions but available under all the conditions. So what does a man want? Or what is the urge of his heart? Coming back to the original question 'what is life' and in light of the analysis and discussion carried out so far, we can define life as the search of limitless happiness. Every man wants it—even every living being

wants it. Otherwise there would have been no rebirth at all. This so called rebirth would not have been there, the continuity of life would not have been there if man did not want the limitless happiness. Why does a man want to be born again? Accepting for the moment that there is rebirth, why is it there? It is there because this quest of limitless happiness is not fulfilled in this birth and so it continues through subsequent births.

Can this quest be fulfilled or can this limitless happiness be attained through any material gain? No gain in the world or no gain in my life can satisfy this requirement, because every material gain is limited. Whatever amount of money I get it is still limited. However much enjoyment I gain it is still limited. However great a name and fame I may get, it is still limited. At the most I may be known in my country, but I am unknown in other countries. How long can power and position remain with me? Suppose all the human beings in the world worship me, even then what? When I walk out of my place the dogs bark at me and therefore dogs do not worship me! So where does it stop? What I want is something that must be applicable everywhere. So what is available cannot satisfy me. What I want is limitless and that want cannot be satisfied by any gain in life. Thus we come to this fundamental principle of life, that man wants happiness and that too, limitless happiness. This limitless happiness is called Brahman.

Brahman means the limitless. The word comes from the Sanskrit root Brh (बृह् बृद्धौ) which means 'to grow', which carries with it, the sense of bigness. So Brahman means that which is big. How big is it? It is The Big, means it is bigger than the biggest. When the adjective big is connected to some object the bigness becomes limited by the object. But when we say The Big, it means unqualified big, the limitless. So Brahman means the limitless. I am seeking limitless happiness and so I am seeking Brahman.

### **Mokṣa (मोक्ष)**

Attainment of limitless happiness makes me free from the desire to acquire happiness. Thus a man who has attained the limitless happiness becomes free from the compulsion of desire. This is:

called liberation or Mokṣa in Vedānta. So the real freedom in life is the freedom from the compulsion in as much as the desires compel an individual to act.

Each of the previous three Puruṣārthas gains a meaning when it is directed to Mokṣa. The real motivation behind Dharma, Artha and Kāma is nothing but Mokṣa.

**Is search for Brahman relevant ?**

Now please tell me whether or not Brahman has any relevance in our life. Does Brahman have anything to do with the life ? Yes. Brahman is relevant because that is what I am seeking in and through every action and every experience. We may use different words for that 'sought'. Somebody may call it Allāh, somebody may call it Father in the Heavens, somebody may call it Akṣar Puruṣottama or some others may call it Jin. Any name may be given, but it only means this simple thing, the limitless happiness. When we use these technical terms such as Brahman, God etc. we don't understand them and we think that we have nothing to do with them or that they are not relevant to our life. Vedānta means the knowledge of Brahman, the limitless happiness. It means that, which I am seeking in and through every experience, in and through every action of mine. It is what my heart is all the time seeking and therefore it is closest to me. Brahman is thus very relevant and we can describe the life of every human being as the search of Brahman, quest of Brahman. Vedānta gives the knowledge of Brahman, so Vedānta becomes very relevant.

**Where is Brahman ?**

But where is this Brahman ? We say Brahma Satyam, Brahman, the limitless happiness that I am seeking is Satya, is Truth, is real. I cannot be seeking something that is unreal or non-existent. I would not have been seeking Brahman had it been non-existent. We should understand this fundamental thing. I cannot search a thing which is not there. Nobody ever seeks a non-existent thing. Everybody seeks and strives for an existent thing. If you ask the river, 'Where are you going ?' 'I am going to the ocean' she will reply.



“Have you seen the ocean?”

“No. I haven’t seen it’.

“Then how do you run towards the ocean?”

“Because I know that it is there and therefore I have been running towards it.’

The fact that the river is flowing means that the ocean must be there. Otherwise the river would not flow. And therefore the question, “Is Brahman there or not?” is not relevant. It must be there. Then alone there is an attempt of seeking It on my part.

But why not say that may be we have been searching something non-existent? That is not possible because we can never appreciate a non-existent thing. Only an existent thing can be appreciated by the intellect. God is another name for Brahman and therefore what I am searching in life is God. He has to be there otherwise I would not have been searching Him.

Every natural desire that I have must have a solution. Observe life. Hunger is a natural phenomenon, so food is provided in the creation to appease hunger. Thirst is natural and so water is provided to quench it. And breathing also is a natural requirement for which air has been provided. There is always a means available to satisfy every natural desire. That is the nature of creation. A cultivated desire—for a certain type of food or drink or air—may not have an answer, but a natural desire, with which I am born, must have an answer.

Is the desire of seeking limitless happiness brought about by my own efforts? Is it a desire specially cultivated by me or is it a natural desire with which I am born? Everybody is born with this desire. It is a natural desire. It is not that at some point in time I decided to desire the limitless. I am born with this desire. Everybody, without any exception, is born with this desire. And since the desire to seek the limitless happiness is natural, there must be an answer for it. Attainment of limitless happiness or Brahman is a natural desire and therefore there must be a way to satisfy it.

Therefore, when the question is asked, 'Is God there or not?' the answer is, if I am there, God has to be there. I am there means: my search for God is there and since my search is there, the object of my search, viz. Brahman or God or Father in the Heavens must also be there. If man stops even for a moment to examine his own life, the relevance of God would be immediately evident.

How then people don't accept God? It is because they do not see Him. I do not accept God because I don't see Him, I don't experience Him. He is not anywhere around and since my search does not seem to fructify, I reject the very thing I am searching. Through money, through enjoyments, through name and fame I am searching this happiness or God. I am not interested in anything else. The only thing that I am interested in is God and nothing else. But then how is it that I am not getting Him? How is it that I do not find Him? But then have I looked everywhere to conclude that God is not there? Have I searched this vast universe to see if God is there or not?

That is the enquiry that Vedānta makes. Has a man looked everywhere or is there a place where he has not yet looked? To illustrate, the Vedāntins relate this familiar story:

It is the story of a thief. A very famous thief of Delhi was travelling in a train from Madras to Delhi by a first class coupe compartment in which another distinguished passenger was also travelling—a rich man of Madras; apparently carrying a lot of cash money with him. The thief had made a very special effort to make sure that he got a berth in that the same compartment. It was a long journey in the olden days which would take two nights before one could reach Delhi from Madras. The two passengers had settled on their berths during the day. At night the rich man opened his briefcase pulled out a wallet containing a large wad of currency notes and started counting it, behind the open lid of the briefcase. The fellow passenger being a thief saw from the corner of his eyes and made a mental note of the wallet containing the money. After counting, the rich man stuffed the money back in the wallet, put it back in the brief-case, tucked it under the seat and then he went to the toilet. After he returned the thief also went to the toilet and

finally both of them went to sleep. Within five minutes the rich man started snoring. So the thief quietly came down from the upper berth, pulled out the brief-case, opened the lock and looked for the wallet. He did not find it. Then he pulled out the suitcase, looked in and out everywhere but still he could not find the wallet. Poor man had to give up the search. But the next morning after the breakfast, the rich man was seen again counting the money from the same wallet. The thief was surprised. An idea struck him and he decided to try again that night. That evening after having gone through the familiar routine, both of them went to sleep. The rich man, as before started snoring. The thief got up. This time, the thief searched not only the brief-case and the suitcase, but all the pockets and hiding places on the body of the rich man. But today also he could not find the wallet. Totally frustrated and disappointed, he went to sleep. The next morning when the train was about to reach Delhi, the thief in his utter astonishment saw the rich man counting money from the wallet! He could not contain himself and asked the rich man about the secret hiding place. The rich man said, 'There is no secret in it. You searched the brief-case and the suit-case and my pockets also but there is one place where you did not look and which you would never suspect also. The wallet was right under your own pillow!!'

This is a simple story. But it happens to be the story of our life. We are searching Brahman, the limitless. Where do we look for It? We look for It in money, in entertainment, in name and fame. Man has been searching Brahman for which alone he goes to the moon, on the mars, under the earth and everywhere. All modern equipments are really meant only for this search. Still he is not successful. Man looks for It in all the places, but there is still one place where he does not look. That place is his own heart. We must look for Brahman where It is. If I look in other places how am I to find It?

परेण नाक निहितं गुहायां विभ्राजते यद्यतो विशन्ति ।

नाकं

(Higher than heaven, seated in the cave of heart, It shines, which the seekers attain.) About that Truth Śruti says that It is as though

hidden in a cave. It is a great secret, therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa calls it Rāja Vidyā, Rāja Guhyam in Bhagavad Gītā.\* Lord says that nobody is going to find Him because he will not look where He is. That is the secret. He is secretly hidden in the very heart of all beings :

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशोऽर्जुन तिष्ठति । भ. गी. १८-६१

(O Arjuna ! Īśvara abides in the heart of all beings).

Before I reject Īśvara I must make sure that I have looked for Him everywhere. No place should be left unsearched. But I find that I have not looked in my own heart, within my own self. And that is where I should look. If I look there, Vedānta declares that I am surely going to find It.

The question of the student of Muṇḍakopaniṣad echoes this basic desire for absolute satisfaction, total fulfilment :

कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवति । सु. उ. १. १. ३

(O adorable Sir ! What is that thing, which having been known, all this becomes known ?) Gaining Brahman, everything becomes gained and therefore Vedānta reveals the vision of life, expounds the knowledge of Brahman knowing which the quest for knowledge comes to its fulfilment. It is the happiness, the gain of which encompasses all other happiness.

This is what is meant by Brahma Satyam. Brahman, the limitless happiness is always present in all the experiences of happiness. So the first step is to understand and accept this fact that Brahman is what I am searching. Otherwise the search would be fruitless. When I say that the Lord does not exist—Īśvara is not—it amounts to saying that what I am searching is not there. That means my whole life is a total waste. I am denying the very thing I am searching. Nobody would ever go to a restaurant to appease his hunger, when he knows it does not serve food at that time. So if I say that Brahman or Īśvara is not and still if I keep on

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् । भ. गी. ४-६ ॥

Royal Science, Royal Secret, the supreme purifier is this.

5 searching happiness the whole life becomes a total waste, a contradiction.

### How to find It ?

The search has to have a meaning. The object of my search must be there and so Brahman has to be there, Īśvara or the Lord has to be there. So we start with the basic premise that BRAHMAN IS. Brahman exists and It is Satya, It is real. It is something that I can achieve. Thus Śaṅkarācārya starts with a very positive note—Brahma Satyam. What I am searching in life is there and it can be found. By whom ? By everybody. Every human being has got the opportunity, the resources, and the capacity or the potential to discover this limitless in life.

Then how do I experience It ? How do I find It ? The answer is that I should look where It is. So I start looking within. I turn my eyes "inwards". Shall I find It ? Well, there is a way of doing it. For any kind of search, there must be an appropriate instrument of observation, and it should be in fit condition. The mind is the instrument to discover Brahman and it should be in fit condition. And so the preparation of the mind becomes a relevant matter in our life, in order to discover Brahman. This preparation calls for a certain way of life, a deliberate training in order for the search to come to a fulfilment. And that is how we come to the relevance of this knowledge in our present practical life. How can I gain this knowledge ? How can I attain this goal in life ? Does it require that I must become a Sannyāsi ? Does it require that I must go to the Himālayas and sit under a tree like a Ṛṣi ? Is it that a particular mode of life or a certain environment is necessary to know Brahman ? In that case Brahman becomes confined to the Himālayas and It is not where we are at the moment.

In order that Brahman, the limitless happiness or God is available in all the places. He must be as much available in the city as in the Himālayas, must be as much available in my home as anywhere else, must be as much available to me as to anyone else, and that is what is of interest to us.

### III Saccidananda-my nature

#### Sat (सत्) the existence

Let us examine what various things a man seeks in life. His various pursuits in life can be looked upon, can be classified in three categories. There is an innate desire in man to perpetuate his existence, to live a day longer. Life is the dearest thing to him. Everybody wants to protect himself, to remain alive; nobody wants to die. Man makes every effort to continue his existence. However miserable may he be, however old may he be, at whatever stage of life may he be, he still wants to continue to live. Even at the age of ninety-one, the old lady has a desire to see the marriage of her great grandson ! Even at that age, she has a long list of things to be accomplished ! The whole pharmaceutical industry thrives on this desire of man to live longer. Why should we have hospitals otherwise ? Emergency rooms, oxygen cylinders and all kinds of gadgets and equipments are there just to help man continue living. However miserable that living may be, we still want to continue it. It is proper also, because it represents an innate desire on the part of man. All the means of security that I surround myself with—shelter, comforts etc—are also with a view to stretching out the life as much as possible.

But everybody knows that this body ultimately will come to an end, that he has to part with it. It is because of this awareness that I want a son who would join my name after his and thereby continue my existence in some manner. That is the reason why we leave name plates. Why does a man want his name to appear on some kind of a name plate ? Because in that form he wants to continue his existence. If the body does not remain, let my name remain. When we go to a cemetery, we find that the tomb-stones indicate the name of the person and the period he lived. Thus through memory in the minds of others, he wants to continue to exist. Through progeny, through name and fame, or through charity man wants to continue his existence. He wants to live which

shows that there is a natural love for life, a natural desire to continue the existence. A number of our activities in the life are prompted by this desire. So there is one class of activities or pursuits which is directed towards perpetuating the existence in some form or the other. This represents the love for life or immortality or existence.

### Cit (चित्)—the knowledge

Second kind of desire, which leads to a different kind of pursuit results from the love for knowledge. Nobody can stand ignorance. On this, another industry thrives—the newspapers, and the magazines and the printing industry. I do not know for what reason, but I am curious to know what is happening in Australia, what is happening in United States, what is happening in various places in the world. I want to know what is there on the Moon, what is there on the Sun and what is there on different planets. I cannot tolerate ignorance. This love for knowledge is the reason why it is so easy for a salesman to attract people on a foot-path just by firing a cracker, showing some kind of a magic and then suddenly start selling tooth-paste or some other thing ! Because when a crowd gathers others are also curious to see what's happening. I should not be left out without some piece of information.

Knowledge is another thing, a man is seeking. That is why I don't mind if I don't get breakfast in the morning but I must have newspaper every morning ! So love for knowledge represents another set of pursuits which is common to everybody. The manner in which a child pursues knowledge is different from that in which an elder pursues it. A scientist pursues it one way, a house-wife in a different. When a child looks through the key hole to find out what's happening inside, that is also nothing but love for knowledge and when I am keeping a watch over my neighbour, that is also out of my love for knowledge.

### Ānanda (आनन्द) the bliss

Third pursuit in life is to gain happiness. It is love for happiness which makes a man maintain various relationships, that he

has in the society. A man wants to love someone and be loved by someone. Seeking enjoyment through the means of films and dramas and picnics and other entertainment programmes is nothing but an expression of this basic desire to be happy.

A man is seeking to continue his existence because there is love for existence or immortality. He is pursuing knowledge in one form or the other which shows his love for knowledge which is also a natural instinct, a natural desire. And thirdly he is seeking happiness—Ānanda, which also is a natural desire. Therefore in technical language he is seeking immortality, knowledge and bliss. He wants to live for ever. This is the desire. He may not express it openly because he knows that it is impossible but had he had his ways, he would have continued to live for ever. How much knowledge does he want? He wants to know everything, all that exists at any place, at any time.

How long do I want to live? I want to live for ever. I want to be immortal. How much knowledge do I want? I want to be omniscient. How much happiness do I want? I want absolute bliss, limitless happiness.

This is what is desired by everybody—a man or a woman, young or old. These natural desires in the hearts of human beings are classified as (1) desire for existence called Sat, (2) desire for knowledge called Cit, and (3) desire for happiness called Ānanda. So Sat, Cit and Ānanda or Existence, Knowledge and Bliss is what everyone loves the most. This is what every man loves, every man wants and every man seeks and strives for.

**Sat-Cit-Ānanda, my own nature**

By saying that man is searching Sat, Cit, Ānanda, we mean that he is searching absolute existence, absolute knowledge and absolute joy (सुखप्राप्ति). This can also be expressed in another way; that he is trying to get rid of the sense of mortality, ignorance and unhappiness. So my pursuit of Saccidānanda also means that I am trying to get rid of its opposites i. e. mortality, ignorance and unhappiness. These three things I cannot stand (दुःखनिवृत्ति).



Let's examine the nature of the things that we generally think of getting rid of. I don't think of getting rid of anything unless it becomes a nuisance. Nobody thinks of getting rid of the hands and the legs I don't wish to part with one of the eyes eventhough I have two of them. This means that nobody wants to get rid of that which is natural to him. On the other hand, if a dust particle falls in my eye or a bug enters my ear, I will direct all my efforts to get rid of them. Even with the finest dust particle in the eye, I cannot be at peace. Therefore in our life, what is it that we want to get rid of? We always want to get rid of that which is unnatural, the thing that is foreign. I cannot stand a foreign element but I am comfortable, I am happy with what is natural to me.

When I say that I want to get rid of mortality, ignorance and unhappiness, what does it amount to? Nobody ever goes to a doctor and complains, 'Doctor! Please do something because my eyes see! Or nobody complains to a doctor saying, 'Doctor! There is something wrong with me, eventhough I eat, every four hours I feel hungry again. So please help me! That he sleeps at night is not a problem to man, because it is natural to him. Nobody is happy being unhappy. And so we know that happiness must be the natural state. That is why we accept it. Natural things alone can be accepted. Nobody goes and consoles or sympathises with a scholar for having stood first in the University! Because we accept happiness as a natural and a desirable thing.

This shows that ignorance, mortality and unhappiness are unnatural, whereas immortality, knowledge and bliss or in other words Sat, Cit and Ānanda are natural to me. Therefore I like them, I love them This indicates the nature of a human being, the nature of all the living beings, because everyone loves Saccidānanda. Existence, knowledge and bliss is the nature of every human being. It is my nature and that is what I am.

Another name for Saccidānanda is Brahman. Saccidānanda means Brahman or Ātmā When we say Brahma Satyam it means that there is one real thing which is my own nature. That indeed

is Saccidānanda or absolute existence, knowledge and happiness. This is the most natural state and so the goal of life. This is the goal that everybody is trying to accomplish. In and through all my actions what I am trying is to attain this natural state. That alone is the goal of life, the pursuit of life. Therefore we must adopt that mode of life which would enable us to attain this vision, achieve this state of absolute existence, knowledge and bliss. And this is what Vedānta is meant for.

Should we call Vedānta practical or not? If Saccidānanda is what I want, if absolute existence, knowledge and bliss is all that I want, then that which enables me to achieve it, has to be practical. Another name for Saccidānanda is Amṛtam or immortality. There is a very famous statement of the Upaniṣad which says :

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।

कव्योपनिषद्-१-३

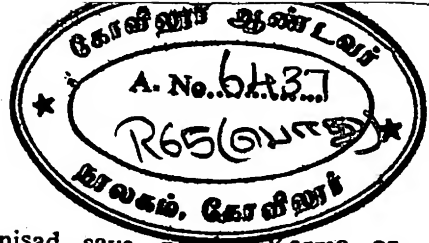
(Not by work, nor by progeny, nor by wealth but by renunciation alone, some attained immortality).

Immortality is the most natural state of the human being attaining which nothing remains to be attained. The ocean is the most natural state of the river, because after reaching the ocean, the river has nowhere to go. All the struggle and conflict in her life have come to an end when a river has reached the ocean, and until then she has to strive and struggle.

In my life also I love this natural state because it brings an end to all the conflicts, all the struggles. That is the state that I desire. That is the reason why we love sleep so much. It is very close to the natural state, although not quite the natural state itself. No effort or exertion is involved in deep sleep. There I enjoy the bliss, without any effort. Even this experience of deep sleep shows that it is the only thing I love the most. That is called Amṛtatvam.

**Means for attainment of Saccidānanda**

Amṛtatvam is the most natural state having attained which nothing remains to be attained, having reached where, no place



remains to be reached. So the Upaniṣad says, not by Karma or action can immortality be attained. This means that the achievement of external things cannot bring about immortality. Whatever action I perform would be limited. So the result that is gained by an action has also to be limited. And sum of any number of limited results of limited actions cannot add up to the limitless, the Amṛtatvam, I am seeking.

Not by progeny—by progeny is meant here the retinue assembled around for the fulfilment of emotions—the friends, the companions; the relatives, the children etc. Even this kind of arrangements also cannot bring about immortality.

Not by wealth—can one attain immortality by wealth? We say that money can buy anything. But money cannot buy immortality. Money can buy things and materials and that is what man is trying to do. He is seeking some kind of ideal arrangement of the things around him with the help of money. But there is no such thing as an ideal arrangement, because the moment, he gets the one he had been working for, his own concept of the ideal has changed. Again he starts seeking the new ideal arrangement. So wealth or material achievements cannot bring about the immortality that I am seeking.

Action or progeny or wealth or name and fame, both here and hereafter, cannot bring about the Amṛtatvam or immortality. Why do we have to discuss the immortality? We have to examine the very life, we have to examine the very actions that we perform, the very goal of life that we entertain. The very motivation in life, the inner urge that one has, has to be examined. What prompts me to perform actions and what prompts me to strive and struggle in life?

Vedānta is the most fundamental science. It does not take anything for granted; it questions everything. I have this desire in my mind; is it a valid desire? Is the desire for happiness, immortality a valid desire? This is the first question raised by Vedānta. That man seeks immortality is all right. Immortality is our birth-right, they say; because it is our very nature. It is natural to me and therefore it is my birth-right. But the manner in which it is

sought is questionable. A young man or an old man, a scientist or a businessman, a clerk or a sweeper, anybody and everybody, without any exception is seeking only one thing viz. immortality. But the means that are employed to attain it, are they the proper ?

What means do we employ to attain limitless happiness or immortality? Karma-action, Prajā-progeny and Dhanam-wealth. These are also popularly known as Dharma, Kāma and Artha respectively. These three Puruṣārthas are the means that we employ for attaining immortality. Security and comfort, wealth and prosperity, name and fame, emotional adjustments and scientific researches—such are the means that we are employing to seek immortality. We are constantly engaged in acquiring and arranging things.

The Upaniṣad urges us to stop and look. There is nothing wrong in action, there is nothing wrong in achievements, in wealth or in progeny. But the manner in which they are employed is wrong. What am I seeking? I am seeking immortality. Can these things attain immortality for me? No. Because these are all small things, limited things. Wealth is limited, progeny is limited, name and fame and power are limited and therefore these limited things can never add up to the limitless or the immortality. My desire is valid. What I want is genuine but the means that I employ are all wrong.

The story of Mullā Nasaruddin is very illustrative for this purpose. This Mullā used to sit in a coffee house every evening with his friends chit-chatting and boasting. One winter evening when it was freezing cold Mullā again started boasting before his friends. He had a bet with them that he could, in that freezing cold spend the whole night on the top of a mountain without fire or any other source for warmth and protection. A nice reward was agreed for this feat. Mullā did spend the whole night on the mountain reading a book in candle light. But he was denied the reward on the ground that he had a candle with him which he had carried under the pretext of reading, but which he employed to keep himself warm. And so according to the friends the stipulation was not fulfilled. In order to teach them a lesson Mullā invited them all for a dinner. When they came they were asked to wait for some

time; and the Mullā went inside the kitchen. Here these friends of his, sitting and waiting at the dining table for food were very hungry. Having waited for one and a half hours, they lost their patience. So one of them got up from his chair, went to the kitchen and peeped in to see what Mullā was doing. To his great surprise he found Mullā very sincerely trying to accomplish something. He had a very big pot which he had filled with water, rice, dāl and everything else and a candle was burning underneath. The friend asked, 'Mullā; what are you doing?' 'I am cooking Khicaḍi. I have been trying to cook with this candle since yesterday, but even the water doesn't seem to have boiled!'

The desire to cook and the desire to eat are genuine desires. We would not question that. But the means that are being employed are not proper. How long will it take for the Khicaḍi to get cooked? It will never get cooked. If we know the goal of life we must also know what means should be employed. I am employing this body as the means to achieve immortality. I am seeking immortality by perpetuating the existence of the physical body. I am expecting the impossible out of this little equipment. I am seeking absolute knowledge through my intellect. This poor little candle-like intellect can think of one thing at a time. It can retain so little and through that intellect I am trying to gain absolute knowledge. And through my mind which is emotional, I am seeking absolute happiness, again an impossible task. The desire to seek existence, knowledge and bliss is genuine, but the means that I am employing, the body, the mind and the intellect the instruments that I have and also the various objects in the world outside, the various emotional set-ups, the various intellectual pursuits—all of these are so small, so insignificant, that in no way can they reach immortality.

And this is where Vedānta comes to our help. Vedānta questions the very pursuit of life. It does not take anything for granted, which unfortunately other sciences do. The psychologist takes the desire of man for granted. The scientist provides the man with whatever he wants, and no doubt that has brought about spectacular achievements in scientific and technological fields. They should be there. And it is because of them that man is more comfortable:

today, has much more flexibility in time and space. But can the immortality be attained by these various pursuits? No. It cannot be attained. Hence we come to a basic contradiction in life. It seems as though the whole human life is full of contradictions. The very basic contradiction is that there is a natural desire for seeking immortality but the means available at my disposal are limited, and therefore they cannot enable me to achieve what I am seeking in life. This is something to be understood. At some point in life man has to come to this understanding. He is then called a mature man, a man awakened to the reality of life. If he does not understand he is called a blind or a child. प्राचः कामाननुयन्ति बालाः । क. उ. २-२ (The unintelligent people entertain the desires for worldly objects).

The Kathōpaniṣad calls them children, the immature people. They have not understood that what they are seeking in life cannot be attained through the means they are employing. They continue to live the same extrovert life. So it requires a certain maturity to understand that whatever achievements have been made so far cannot attain me what I am seeking in life. With this understanding the whole trend of life has to be changed. In order to attain immortality, the whole vision of life, the attitude towards life must change. And that is what Vedānta reveals, tells us or expects us to do.

Once these fundamentals of life have been understood, my attitude changes. No more do I depend upon little things to attain the goal of my life. I start looking elsewhere. If the immortality is not in the wealth, if it is not in the pleasure, if it is not in the name and fame, if it is not anywhere else in the world, then where is it? Since I am seeking, it must be there at some place. Śruti says : परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायाम् ; the immortality is hidden in a cave. That is why it is called a secret. It is hidden in the cave of my heart. The immortality is hidden in my very intellect, in my very being. I myself am the immortal one and therefore if I am seeking it outside I can never find it. All our extrovert efforts to gain immortality are like that of the old lady who was searching for a needle in the light of a street lamp; a needle which she had lost in her hut.

To search for the needle we can use all sorts of advancements. We can bring special flash lights, flood lights or magnetic counters. But none of them will bring about the attainment of the needle-which is not there. We keep on looking, but if we are looking for it in a wrong place where it is not, how are we ever going to find it?

Immortality is what I am looking for, but the place where I am looking is a wrong place, and hence at no time in life will I ever find it. Just because I am working, just because I am searching, just because I am advancing does not mean I am really progressing in life. We must understand the difference between progress and advancement in life. We have wrong concepts about progress. Accomplishing more things, getting more comforts is progress as we think it to be. A comfortable life is what we are seeking. And Vedānta is not opposed to a comfortable life. But Vedānta says that a comfortable life is not the solution. Man in fact is seeking a happy life. But instead of trying for that, he is spending all his time in bringing about a comfortable life.

So when this question is raised, 'Is Vedānta relevant to present-day practical life?' I think what is meant by present day practical life is a comfortable life. Is Vedānta relevant in bringing about a comfortable life? By studying Vedānta can I get promotion? By studying Vedānta can I get more money in the business? By studying Vedānta can I get more things? Well, we do not know. Vedānta does not address itself to comforts in life. Vedānta addresses itself to what I want fundamentally. Happiness is the only thing I want. I am confusing comfort with happiness and therefore success in life in terms of material gains is considered to be measure of progress in life.

When do we say that he is a successful man? We say that when he has got a great number of possessions. If one has accomplished maximum material achievements we call him a successful man, which he may very well be. Again understand that Vedānta is not opposed to these things. But in Vedānta the success is measured on the basis of my closeness to the goal of immortality.

the goal of lasting happiness. This is the measuring rod for success and not number of things I have achieved. This we have to decide in life-what is it that I want?

That is where Vedānta directs our attention :

न कर्मणा न प्रजया न धनेन अमृतत्वमानुषः ।

The goal of life cannot be attained through action, progeny or wealth, the limited, insignificant means. They have no capacity to attain for me the limitless that I want. I have to understand what I want in life. At the moment that itself is not understood. Once that is understood life will definitely change. Life will attain altogether a different outlook and so Vedānta is a vision or outlook of the life.

The immortality that I want is in my very heart. That is where I should have been seeking, not outside. Then what for is the outside world? Can all the things in the world attain for me the immortality? No. This is indicated by Jagat Mithyā in the verse that we have quoted of Śaṅkarācārya : 'ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या.....!' The world is unreal, We shudder when we hear this. By stating that the world is unreal, is Vedānta asking us to reject the world, to reject the wealth and to reject the family? Vedānta is not practical if it says so.

In fact, Vedānta is not asking me to reject anything, because nothing belongs to me. How can I reject and what can I reject? What Vedānta asks us to do is to understand what ought to be understood. It is that the immortality that I am seeking is my very nature, it is the very core of my personality. In as much as the goal of my life is immortality which is my very being and in as much as it is not to be sought after in the outside world, it is said that the Jagat is Mithyā.

Mithyā means unreal-that which very much appears to be real but which is not real. When I look at the world, it appears as though the world can fulfil my desire of attaining immortality. The things and beings and achievements generally create this impression in me or may seem to give me the promise that through them I



can attain immortality. And it is only for that reason that I am always running after material achievements. They have got this fascination, the attraction.

That happiness comes from the world, that sensation comes from the objects is my conclusion but it is not right. Happiness does not come from any object in the world. It only comes from within, from myself. How come then when I enjoy objects I seem to experience happiness? That happiness is akin to that of a dog who is chewing a dry bone which does not have even a drop of juice in it. The dog chews it for hours together thinking there is blood in it. But in fact he enjoys the very blood that is coming from the wounds that the bone has made in his mouth, thinks that the happiness, or the taste comes from the bone. So also when the happiness appears to come from the world, in reality it only comes from myself.

What does this knowledge do? It creates the right attitude in the mind towards the world. The world is not useful for the immortality that I want to gain. So I must give it up. That is how people take Sannyāsa. But that is not the proper way. An aversion for the world, a hatred for the world, a rejection of the world is not desirable. Nothing can be rejected. Then why is the world there? The things and beings and the wealth and achievements cannot serve any purpose that I want them to serve, then why at all should they be there? Yes, they cannot serve the purpose that I want them to serve. But they can serve some other purpose and that is why they are there. The world is called Mithyā only in as much as it cannot gain me immortality. It does not mean that the world is not there or that the world should be rejected as useless.

The other day I was invited for Bhikṣā at some place. I went there, and as the door was opened I entered the hall. There was a dining table nicely set up but no food had yet been served. The lady of the house was inside and I was feeling very hungry. Meantime I saw some beautiful fruits on the dining table and the thing that attracted me the most was a beautiful apple. Not finding anybody around I quietly picked up the apple. And as soon as I picked

it up I came to know that the apple was Mithyā, it was false. It was a wooden apple placed on the modern dining table which was decorated with beautiful flowers and fruits; all of them were artificial. They were so lively and so attractive that we cannot believe them to be unreal.

So just because the sense of perception says it is real, a thing need not be real. The apple was very beautiful, very realistic. Only when I picked it up and started biting it, I came to know that it was not a real apple and that it was a wooden one. It is called Mithyā apple. It is Mithyā in as much as it cannot serve the purpose of an apple, to appease my hunger, which it very much seems to be promising to do. Not that it is useless or it has no purpose. It is beautiful and its purpose is to decorate the table. Just because it cannot appease my hunger I should not hate the apple or throw it away.

I should not throw away the things in the world just because they cannot appease my hunger. They are not meant for that. This flower cannot appease my hunger, for that is not the purpose the flower is meant to serve. In as much as the world cannot appease my hunger of immortality, from that standpoint I can say that the objects, the things and the beings in the world are Mithyā. But it does not mean that the things are not non-existent or that they are not beautiful. In fact a wooden apple may look more beautiful than the real one. So no doubt the world is a beautiful thing to enjoy, but the manner in which it should be enjoyed is different. By eating it, that apple cannot be enjoyed. It is to be enjoyed by looking at it as a piece of art, as a piece of work. That apple is not an object of eating.

Thus we come to the most beautiful and the most fantastic way of relating ourselves to the world. Since this word Mithyā is not easy to understand, we require a teacher to make us understand it. That is why this knowledge is a secret. Words are floating around and are often used wrongly. In our colloquial language we use the word Mithyā to mean imaginary or non-existent or wrong. Therefore people develop an aversion for the world. Mithyā means

it does not serve the purpose it promises to serve but it does serve some other purpose. It is an object of adoration. It is an object of appreciation. Once I understand this, my relationship with the apple changes. Earlier, when I didn't know the real nature of the apple, I looked upon it as an object of enjoyment. I expected it to appease my hunger taking it to be my food. I may touch it, I may smell it and I may even try to cut it with a knife. That is I may examine it well from all the sides, to know its real nature. When I realise that it cannot appease my hunger, there arises in me a kind of dispassion, a feeling quite different from the one I entertained so far. With reference to the apple which I now know to be Mithyā, I am called a Sannyāsi. I become an apple-Sannyāsi.

Understand the nature of Vairāgya or Sannyāsa. It is not that I have an aversion for the apple or I throw away the apple. I just understand the real nature of the apple and now I relate to it in a different way. I still continue to relate to the apple, I still continue to retain it, but my relationship is now different. That change in relationship alone is called Sannyāsa. Sannyāsa is not something physical. It is the maturity or the understanding of the real nature of the thing. Sannyāsa is called Jñāna.

By Sannyāsa, by renunciation is meant the understanding of the real nature of the world. 'Some attained immortality through renunciation', says the Śruti. They stopped searching for immortality where it is not and started searching where it is. Once I start searching for the needle where it has fallen, if not today, tomorrow, if not tomorrow, the day after, the needle will be found because it is there. This is called understanding. The world is Mithyā. It is something beautiful, no doubt. It is something to be enjoyed. But the manner in which it is to be enjoyed is different. Not that by eating the apple is to be enjoyed, but it is to be enjoyed by observing and watching, adoring and praising it.

This is Vairāgya. Vairāgya does not have any hatred in it. It is that which should always create a joy in me. The joy of

knowledge, the joy of maturity is called Vairāgya. Not having understood this fact we think that the Sannyāsi is the one who only emaciates his body and who does not know how to enjoy life. But this is a false notion. A Sannyāsi is a mature person. He understands the real nature of the world and relates to it appropriately.

## IV Jagat Mithyā

### Nature of the world

Vedānta gives us the vision of life to understand the real nature of the world. World is Mithyā in the sense that it cannot appease my hunger for immortality. Then how should I relate myself to it? That is also shown. World is not an object of enjoyment. It is to be worshipped. By this we come to altogether a different outlook. This woman is not something to be enjoyed, but it is something to be worshipped. Do not look upon this person as a body, look upon her as mother, as God. This is what Vedānta tells us. That does not change the person. That does not change anything. It only changes my outlook. It changes my vision and therefore the next thing we enquire into is the nature of the world or the creation. If we understand that, we shall know how to relate to it.

The world is called creation. We must have heard that the world is a creation. Creation means that which has been intelligently and deliberately made to serve some purpose. Pot is called a creation because it has a definite purpose to serve. Somebody has deliberately, intelligently made it. That is why there is one opening at the top and not at the bottom. Nor are there any openings on the sides. The pot is meant for filling water, so it has only one opening and not more. It has also got a certain shape, a spherical shape with a minimum surface and a maximum volume. So a deliberate shape is given and a deliberate form is given and it has a specific purpose to serve and therefore we say that a pot is a creation.

This microphone is a creation. Somebody must have sat down and thought about it and then created this particular object called microphone. Since it has a specific purpose to serve, since it is deliberately created, some intelligence must have gone in making this microphone. So also when we observe any object in the world,

we find that every object has a purpose to serve. Every object is deliberately placed where it should be. Every object has its place in the system, in the creation. So it gives us reason to think that the whole world is a creation, deliberately, intelligently made by a Creator.

Here again we are reminded of the pot because we don't accept this so called Creator. We cannot accept God or the Lord. The moment we say that pot is a creation, there is always going to be a pot-maker. Similarly the moment it is said that the world is created, we know what the next step is going to be. And this one thing we cannot accept. Scientists cannot accept it because if the pot-maker is there, where is he, is the immediate question. If it is said that the world is created, the question is, where is the Creator of the world. Where is He? We don't see God anywhere around.

There is an incident about George Washington and his son. George must have had some religious background, a religious man, as he was. He used to go to the church and worship God. He believed in God. But his son, like any other young man challenged him, 'Daddy, you are going to the church and worshipping the Lord but where is this Lord? I do not see Him. Hence I do not accept the existence of God. Please show me your God.' The son and the father often had this kind of discussions.

Now in the president's residence they had a big back yard, a very big field, where they used to grow lots of things. One day when Washington and the son were walking along the terrace, all of a sudden the son noticed something in the field, an unusual scene, and he said to his father.

'Look, daddy! Do you see something there in the cabbage field?'

George Washington looked carefully and said.

'Yes, sunny! I find that something is written there.'

'What is it daddy?'

'It seems as though George Washington is written there on the cabbages.'

'Do you know, daddy, how is it written there?'

'It must have happened to be there by itself. By an accident it might have been written there.'

'How can it ever happen, daddy? When we find something written, there must be a writer for it to have been written' the son said.

'No, no. I don't see any writer around.'

George still refused to accept that there was a writer. So again the son insisted.

'Daddy! Even if you don't see a writer, he must be there. Otherwise how can this ever be written so systematically and so legibly !?'

'My dear sunny! the whole creation is just like that. If I have the eyes, I can see the signature of the one who created it, because when there is something systematic, when there is something deliberate and intelligent, there must be an intelligence behind it. Otherwise why should the flowers only look like this? Why should a flower have a particular purpose? Why should it have certain characteristics? Why should the things be, and continue to be the way they are?'

Why at all should there be only a specific distance between the Sun and the Earth. This is not an accident that the Earth is exactly where it is in the solar system, that it has got a certain environment, that it is provided with a certain kind of atmosphere!

In this manner Vedānta again points to altogether a different aspect of life, which is missed by us or which is not accepted by us, and it is that there is God, or that there is the Creator of the world. Vedānta without this would be incomplete. The creation is the signature of God. The creation is a piece of art. The poets and the philosophers and the artists—the sensitive people can see the beauty of the art functioning everywhere. A scientist can see order everywhere. He can see everything interconnected by the laws of science or by the laws of the nature, the thing which otherwise looks random to you and I. When there is law, there must be a law-maker, a governor, a creator. Thus by observing the world,

we come to understand that the world is a deliberate, systematic, intelligent creation like a pot or a watch or a microphone or a rose. There must be an intelligent creator behind, otherwise a thing cannot be what it is and where it is.

The world is therefore created by the Lord. This we may understand at the moment but we cannot accept it. This is probably because we do not see the Lord. 'Where is the Lord or God? I don't see Him.', we ask this question. When this question is asked, there is already an assumption behind it; that what I see is not God. This assumption is always there underneath.

'How do you say that you do not see God? Why do you think that what you see is not God?

'Oh! I thought that God must have four hands holding Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gaḍā, Padma in them' or,

'I thought that He must have flute in His hands or bow and arrow in His hands' or,

'I thought that God is some kind of light' etc.

All right. This means that we don't see God of our personal choice or notions. This is agreeable to the extent that we want to see God about whom we entertain our own notions, and that God we don't see. That God may not be there. True.

Somebody asked Svāmījī, 'Are you a God-man?' He said, 'I don't know. It depends upon what you mean by God. If you think that God-man must be able to fly, then I am not a God-man. I may be the God-man with respect to God that I know. But I may not be a God-man with respect to God that you think.' So when I say that I do not see God, what I do not see is the God as per my concept of God. But how can I say that what I see is not God? Vedānta says that what all I see is nothing but God, वासुदेवः सर्वमिति ।

### Creator and the creation

This is another way of appreciating the Lord. Vedantic teachers say that this Jagat is Mithyā, it is unreal. The same teachers also say that सर्वं खलु इदं ब्रह्म । This entire creation is nothing but Brāh-



man. Isn't that a wonderful thing? All of a sudden we come upon another meaning of the word Mithyā. So now how do I relate myself with the world? That the world is nothing but the creation of the Lord. It is nothing but an expression of the Lord. How do you say that the world is the Lord? It is our experience that what is created is always different from the one who creates it. The created is different from the creator. A pot is always different from the pot-maker. Similarly also, the impression of the God that we have is that He is sitting in the heaven. He had some kind of clay with Him and from that He made this whole universe. That kind of God we cannot accept. All right. But at the same time we cannot say God is not. If God is, is He sitting in the heaven? Sitting there in the heaven, how does He administer this creation? Here comes the uniqueness of Vedānta when such questions arise. The answers to them are not to be found anywhere else.

Any object to be created requires two causes, a material cause; Upādāna Kāraṇa out of which the object is created and an efficient or an intelligent cause, Nimitta Kāraṇa who creates the object. A pot, in order to be created, requires a creator, a pot-maker, an intelligent cause, but the pot-maker by himself cannot create a pot. He requires some material called clay. Clay is called the material cause, out of which the pot-maker called the intelligent or the efficient cause creates the pot. That the intelligent and the material cause must be different is our determined conclusion. In all the theologies, in all the religions God is the intelligent cause, who took clay from somewhere and moulded the whole world and is now sitting in the heaven watching the play. This God is not acceptable to anybody.

While thinking of God, these questions very often occur in our minds. If God is there, how does this stealing take place? How can man commit a murder or do anything wrong, when God is there? We think that God must be always around, with some weapons in His hands. The moment He finds somebody stealing, He must destroy that fellow. The moment He finds somebody killing the other, He must destroy him. The moment He finds somebody being dishonest, He must destroy him. How is it that God doesn't do

it ? This is another reason why we cannot accept God. If God is there, why is there injustice and inequality and suffering ? That is all we find everywhere and so conclude there is no God. It seems that He sees the man suffering and enjoys it. He has some kind of callousness. He is a sadist.

If this concept of God is not acceptable, we cannot blame anybody for that. To us also it is not acceptable. Vedānta does not accept this concept of God. Vedānta reveals a unique thing about the nature of God. It says that God is not only the pot-maker but He is the pot too. The creator is God and the created also is God. God Himself is both the intelligent and the material cause, both the creator and the created. This is explained in the Upaniṣads by the very famous example of a spider.\*

Look at the spider. How does he create his web ? A spider creates the web out of the saliva from its own naval. And the intelligence behind the web is also the spider himself. He plans out because the web is a deliberate creation. It is not just by accident that a web is found in such places which are the most ideal traps for all sorts of little, flying creatures. A spider chooses the place where the web is going to be created. It is a purposeful, systematic creation, of which, Mr. Spider himself is the intelligent cause. And in as much as he gets the material for creating the web out of his own saliva, he is the material cause. So Mr. Spider himself is the very creator as well as the created.

So in order to gain the vision of life revealed by Vedānta it is very necessary for us to understand the nature of the world. The world is not an accident, it is a deliberate creation. It is created by what we call God. But where is this God ? Is this God apart from the world ? No. He is very much in and through the world.

The whole creation of the world is compared to an embroidery made on a piece of cloth. In a beautiful design on the cloth, there is a palace in which there is a king and a courtyard and the courtiers and garden, trees, flowers, fruits and many other things.

\* यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च । सु. उ. १-१-७

Just as the spider projects and swallows....

All these things are depicted in that embroidery. What is this whole creation made of? What is the king made of? He is made of the thread. What are the courtiers made of? They are made of that same thread. And what are the garden, the trees, the flowers, the fruits made of? They are all made of the same thread of which the king is made. Just as one thread pervades the entire creation in the embroidery, the Lord says in Bhagavad Gītā that everything in the universe is woven into Me.\* I am the fundamental thread that passes through, that pervades all the things and beings that are created. If a child finds one loose end of the thread and starts pulling it, in about half an hour, the entire creation of the embroidery disappears. The entire world of embroidery is made up of one thread. The whole embroidery is nothing but the thread. Hey, but how can the king be the same thread as the beggar is? Where there is apparent diversity how can there be a unity? Apparently the king looks very rich and wealthy and powerful and the beggar looks miserable and powerless but both are made of the same stuff.

This is altogether a different vision to look at the world. The moment I understand this nature of the world, my attitude towards the world changes. The world is now no more a place of indulgence. It is no more a place to go merely for sensuous gratification. The world is altogether a different thing. It becomes an altar of worship; so also the wealth which is a part of the world, the progress which is a part of the world, and the action and the name and fame, too, which are again the part of the world. All these, being a part of the world, have a role to play in my life. The wealth has a definite role to play, the name and fame have a definite role to play. The body has a definite role to play. The mind and the intellect and everything that is there in the creation has a definite role to play. If I employ these means for the purposes or the roles that they are meant to play, they can bring about for me the attainment of the goal, that I am seeking in life. This nature of the world is to be understood.

\* मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतम् । भ. गी. ७-७.

All this is woven into me.

Is this understanding, this knowledge or the vision of the world opposed to the mode of life that I am leading today or is it in keeping with it? How can I bring about this vision in my day to day life? I need not change the mode of my life. What changes is not 'What I do'. What changes is only 'how I do' or 'how I look at the things'. It is merely a matter of changing the vision, or changing the outlook towards the life. We have to understand the role of actions, the role of achievements in life.

What then is the relationship between the so called materialist and the spiritualist? Are they two different kind of persons looking for altogether different ends or are they looking for the same end? How can the material means be applied to the spiritual end? How can we eliminate the split between the material and the religious life?

Īśvara, the Lord as we discussed is both the creator and the created, the efficient cause and the material cause. So what is created, viz. the whole world of the names and the forms is also the Lord. One who is the architect of the whole creation is also the Lord and the material from which the whole creation is made is also the Lord. This is the unique concept of Lord for us to understand. Then alone the life can get the proper direction, then alone can we have the proper appreciation of the Lord. If we think that the Lordship is confined to the creator, who has nothing to do with what is created, the understanding of God will not be complete. Vedānta reveals to us this nature of God that He is not only the creator but is the created also.

In case of a pot, the efficient cause, the potmaker is different from the pot. So where the pot goes, there the pot-maker need not go. When the pot breaks, the pot-maker does not break. When the pot is filled up, the pot-maker is not filled up. Whatever happens to the pot is of no concern to or does not in any way affect the pot-maker. as the pot-maker the creator is different from the pot. Were this not the case, the pot-maker would have been sitting on the top of the pot going with it wherever it went. But that is not the case with the Lord. The material cause is found wherever the creation is, and so the clay goes wherever the pot goes. So also

The Lord being the material cause is to be found wherever the creation is.

This being the vision of the Lord, what vision do I have about myself now? The limitlessness or the immortality is what I am seeking and that is my nature. Immortality must be my real nature because I am happy being immortal, I am happy being limitless. Whereas I am unhappy being otherwise. If mortality were my nature, I would have been happy being mortal. I would have been comfortable being sorrowful, if sorrow were my nature. The fact that I cannot stand unhappiness shows that it is not my nature. Everybody is happy with his nature. Everybody is unhappy being opposed to his nature. Fire is very happy being hot. Water is happy being cold. Sun is happy being brilliant.

Similarly a human being will also be happy only when he abides in his nature. And therefore to abide in his nature, to own up his real nature that is immortality or bliss or limitlessness becomes the goal of life. Somehow today I am not able to own it up. I am not able to enjoy my real nature just like the water that is hot or like the water that is on the top of the mountain separated from the ocean. There is a struggle in life only when a thing is in an unnatural situation. The water that finds itself to be on the top of the mountain struggles to flow down. The nature of the water is to be at the sea level, to be one with the sea and until that nature is reached the water keeps on struggling. The fulfilment of all the actions and struggles of the river lies in meeting the ocean. Being one with the ocean is a state, when a river is comfortable, when it doesn't want to be different from what it is. I also find the struggle or the conflict in my life. I am struggling to be free. I am struggling to attain something, to be different from what I am. I am struggling and striving to get out of the present limitations because I am not in a natural state. Nobody struggles to get into sleep. The struggle is in getting out of the sleep and not getting into sleep. This is how the whole industry of alarm clocks is flourishing.

Sleep is pretty close to my natural situation. Therefore I am very comfortable and happy being in sleep. I am with myself during

at that time. Practically nothing separates me from myself. When something separates me from myself, I struggle to eliminate that separation. When water is hot heat separates water from its nature of coolness, so it struggles to get rid of heat. Similarly also something separates me from myself and therefore life is nothing but a struggle to get rid of that obstacle.

That factor which separates me from myself is called "misapprehension" arising from the "non-apprehension" of my real nature. The ignorance of my real nature and misapprehension which consists of all sorts of notions and complexes is what really separates me from my nature. No other thing can separate me. In this particular effort of mine to eliminate the separation, it becomes necessary to understand the world properly. At the moment the world is a big source of struggle for me since it creates all sorts of disturbances in my mind. My relationship with the world is not smooth, it is not harmonious. If I can attain the harmony in the relationship with the world, the world cannot create any conflict or cannot create any disturbance in my mind. At the moment all the impulses that come from the world create disturbances in my mind because I am not in harmony with the world without, and so to attain the harmony becomes the goal of the life.

Attainment of this fundamental harmony is the same as the attainment of the immortality, the joy or the bliss. It is the same as Mokṣa or freedom or Lord or whatever name we may give.

Today we fail to understand the purpose of the creation. We manyatimes wonder why is this world there at all. What all it does today is to create problems, struggles and conflicts in my mind because that is what most of the time world seems to be doing to me. Wherever I observe, what do I find? All sorts of diversities, injustice, sufferings is what I see. I don't find any purpose in the world. I don't know how to look at the world and therefore I do not know how to relate myself to the world. I have not been able to discover the harmony that is there in the world. So to discover that harmony or to be able to relate myself or to develop the relation with the world is what we have to learn to do.

## V. Jīva—the individual

To discover the harmony with the world is to discover the real nature of the world. And therefore what should be the nature of my relationship with the world, how should I transact with the world is to be understood.

Vedānta says that this limited individual is in itself Brahman, the limitless. जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः । I take myself to be sorrowful or limited but in reality I am of the nature of bliss or Ānanda; this is what Vedānta says. That limitless or that immortality that you are searching is indeed your own nature. There should be no struggle in life at all. There should be no unhappiness at all. I am already limitless. I am immortal. I am of the nature of bliss. What I need in life is nothing. If I could really understand and own up, what Vedānta reveals about myself, life would be the most wonderful, ever a source of joy. This is not the case at the moment. I am not able to own up my nature. Since I am already immortal, since I am already limitless, there is nothing that I need in life. I don't need anything because whatever I need is already with me.

Then what do I have to do to own up my real nature? I have to get rid of something. Some obstacles prevent me from experiencing myself as Saccidānanda. It is not a matter of acquiring something that I do not have. It is a matter of getting rid of something that I have falsely taken upon myself. This sense of limitation, sense of being bound, sense of being dependent is false and that alone is to be given up. Life is meant for that. Today my life is committed only for acquiring things. By acquiring wealth, by acquiring possessions, by acquiring name and fame and power and position that are limited and insignificant, I am trying to fill up the ocean which is already filled up.

The Upaniṣadic teacher tells us not to bother about these little things. We are already filled up and therefore we need not waste our time and energy in acquiring them. The actions, the

progeny or the wealth cannot fill me up, I being the one who is already fulfilled. Giving up all the fallacies, notions, sense of limitations is only what is needed.

I am already the tenth man.\* I think that the tenth man is lost but he is not lost. I am myself the tenth man, whom I forget to count. So what is to be done in order to find out the tenth man is only to give up the notion that the tenth man is lost. I am already the one whom I am searching for. If this is understood, I come to know for sure that nothing is necessary to be acquired in life. Life is not meant for acquiring things, it is meant for getting rid of the ignorance, getting rid of Rāgas and Dveṣas, passions and aversions, likes and dislikes which actually deny me what I am. Getting rid of them is called Tyāga, renunciation.

Tyāga means renouncing that which is false, which is useless. For an intelligent man who has understood this fact about life, the life is now for getting rid of things, for renouncing, for serving. All of a sudden, when this Vedāntic approach is understood, I no more wish to be served by the world. I now start serving the world. I continue to perform actions as before, not for getting something I do not have, but for getting rid of things that I have falsely taken upon myself. This is done by serving the world as the Lord, by knowing that the whole world is the Lord. It is necessary to know that a human being and the Lord are not different, that every human being, every living being is potentially God, that Lord alone pervades through all the names and forms. And so anything

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\* According to the 'Tenth Man Story', ten young disciples of a Guru wanted to make a trip to the next village. The Guru cautioned their leader to be careful in crossing the rain-swollen river. In fact, at the river it was too deep to wade and they all had to swim across. On the other side the leader counted to make certain all had made it across safely. To his enormous distress he found out that only nine had reached the other shore. For a long time he searched for the missing tenth man until a wise old man who had been watching the scene pointed out that the leader had forgotten to count himself.



that I can serve, as long as I serve with the *Īśvarārpaṇa* *Buddhi* is the service of the Lord.

So what does a student of *Vedānta* do ? He does not seek anything in life. He wants to serve. He dedicates his life for the world and not for himself. He also eats the same *Khicaḍi* and *Capāṭi* that we eat. He does the same work with the same instruments available to all. He sits in the same way, walks in the same way, eats in the same way and talks also in the same way as we do. Then what is the difference ? The attitude is different. Now he walks not for himself but for the Lord. He eats not for himself but for the Lord. Anything and everything that he does is not for himself but is for the Lord.

While concluding the *Upadeśa* of *Bhagvad Gītā* the Lord says \* that all the created things and beings, their very existence is because of the Lord. It is the Lord because of whom they have a certain purpose to serve and by whom everything is pervaded, by whom all the names and forms are pervaded. Just as I pervade the different parts of my body so also the Lord pervades the whole creation. Somebody may see an inequality in the body. Look ! How poor the legs are ! They always have to walk And how lucky is the mouth, it always has to eat ! (if you consider eating as a lucky thing !) So that is how some people evaluate the life. They think that some people are happy and some are unhappy. But what is the rod to measure the evolution ! Shall we say that the legs are miserable because they have to walk, hands are miserable because they have to work and the mouth is very lucky because it has only to eat ? In that case we will cut asunder our hands and legs and have only mouths all over. Would that be all right ? Would the mouths be able to get any food of their own if the hands do not work and the legs do not walk ?

\* यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ भ. गी. १८-४६

From Whom is the evolution of all beings, by Whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him, with one's own action, man attains Perfection.

Head is the most exalted limb in my body. Having been born from the mouth of the Lord a Brahmin is considered to be the most exalted being. He is the best in the creation. Whereas Śūdra having been born from the legs of the Lord, is considered to be the lowest. How can this be so? In my integrated personality how can I say that one limb is better than the other limb or one limb is superior to the other? I cannot say so. That is why if one of the limbs goes on strike the whole body suffers. If the legs say that they are exhausted and that they would stop moving from one place to the other, how is the body going to function! What will the head do? The food stops because I cannot move. If the mouth claims that it is better than the hands as a result of which if hands stop feeding the mouth, what would the mouth do? Probably for a few days it may eat like dogs and cats but how long can it go on? So every limb in the body has equal importance, is equally beautiful.

How do we measure the beauty? We may think that the face is more beautiful than the hands, depending upon what concepts of beauty one has. In fact beauty is not to be measured by shape. Beauty is not to be measured by form. Beauty is not to be measured by the container. Beauty is to be measured by what is contained in the container.

Thus Vedānta points out altogether a different thing. Don't look at the container or the carrier. Look at the content. That which is contained, that which is carried is important and not the vehicle that carries. In what wrapper a chocolate comes is not important. Although children fight with one-another; somebody wants a yellow wrapper, somebody wants an orange wrapper, somebody wants a white wrapper. All right. But we know that wrappers are not important. What comes in the wrapper is important. We must know that त्यागेन एके अमृतत्वम् आनयुः, they attained immortality by renunciation. Giving up the wrapper can alone the chocolate be enjoyed. In order to understand this harmony in life we must know the equality pervading the apparent diversity.

The whole body is equal, because I equally pervade all the limbs. The limbs are not similar to one-another but they are equal in as much as all of them contain one Ātmā—one Self. Similarly also the things and beings in the creation are not similar. They don't look alike but they are still one in as much as each one of them contains the same Lord, each one is the expression of the same Lord.

निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म । भ. गी. ५. १९

(Brahman is spotless indeed and equal.)

It doesn't matter what the name and form is, but what functions through the names and forms is what matters. Don't bother about the container, bother about the content. Don't worry about the form or the shape in which the gold comes; it is gold that is important. Though the ladies may fight for the shape and design of the ornaments, the goldsmith doesn't bother about different forms because he has got the vision of gold in all the ornaments. So also a Jñānī, a man of realisation, a man of perfection is the one who is able to appreciate the Lord in all forms. So now what is my relationship with the world? World is now no more a place of acquiring things or indulging into things. It is a place of giving and serving.

**Karmayoga (कर्मयोग)**

The moment we talk of giving and serving, the incentive in the life seems to get lost.

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । भ. गी. २-४७

(You have a right only in action, never in its fruits). 'Your freedom, your right is in the performance of the action. You keep on performing action and let Me worry about the result. I will take care of the results' says Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavad Gītā. This sounds very frustrating, because generally I am not motivated to work unless I get some benefit as a result of it. But the whole principle of Karmayoga is different. There, the very medium of communicating with the world is through action.

Man has to perform action. He cannot escape action and he should not escape it. Action is the only means available to us for

evolution, for development, for gaining happiness or anything that we desire to achieve in life. But we must learn how to act. We must know the purpose of action. While explaining Karmayoga in the second chapter of Bhagavad Gītā the Lord says :

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥ भ. गी. २-४९ ॥

(Far lower than the Yoga of wisdom is (desire prompted) action, O Dhananjaya. Seek refuge in wisdom (selfless service). Wretched are they whose motive is the 'fruit').

Those people who employ the action merely for the sake of its result, merely for getting something from the world, are the fellows who are trying to get a few buckets of water out of the ocean not knowing the worth of the ocean. Action has a much greater capacity to benefit us, to bless us, than what we are employing it for. Result is only one aspect of the action and a very minor aspect too. The Lord says that those who do not understand the worth of the action and employ it merely for the sake of gaining paltry results are misers. They are treating a jewel only as a piece of glass.

What for is the action, then, if it is not performed for the sake of result? Action is performed for the sake of action, because action itself can be a source of great joy, when it is performed for serving others, rather than being served. Action is not to be performed for the individual self, it is to be performed for the totality, for the Lord.

Vedānta reveals the truth of myself, I am already Brahman. I am already limitless, immortal and the world, like a wooden apple is unreal which cannot really appease my hunger of immortality. A Karmayogi also acts in the same manner as you and I do. But he does not act with selfish motive. He acts selflessly. Love, happiness, joy are the things to be given, not to be sought. I am already the store-house of them, therefore I don't seek love or joy. I have them and I give them. The world of objects does not have them and so I should not waste my actions in seeking joy and

fulfilment from the world. Instead, I make my actions, the means to give happiness and love to the world.

This is the principle of Karmayoga. Vedānta gives altogether a new vision for performance of action. Action is not to be wasted away in acquiring wealth or other little things in life. Action is to be performed for the sake of action, for service to the Lord.\* The Lord is manifested before me as the world and I worship Him through my actions. Action becomes an offering to the Lord. Every action becomes a flower offered at the feet of the Lord.

This attitude of Karmayoga brings about fantastic results. The selfish attitude that I naturally possess slowly and slowly gets neutralised by the attitude of selfless service. In course of time, the heart becomes selfless. It discovers the joy of giving. So far I only knew the joy of acquiring. Now the teacher asks us to discover the joy of giving. When I discover that joy, giving becomes easy because to give is much easier whereas to acquire is very difficult.

When I want to acquire things that don't belong to me there are always struggles and conflicts. But I can very easily give a thing that belongs to me, with no struggle at all. This is altogether a different way of discovering joy in life. Understand that giving and serving can be very joyful. Discover the joy of giving. Discover the joy of renunciation or Sannyāsa. Sannyāsa means joy. It is not a certain stage of life. It is not a certain mode of life or a certain cloth or any such thing as we normally associate with Sannyāsa. Sannyāsa is the renunciation of selfishness accompanied with a positive attitude of serving and giving.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ भ. गी. २.५९

(Endowed with the wisdom, (the attitude of yoga) one casts off (becomes free from) in this life both good deeds and evil deeds; therefore devote yourself to Yoga. Skill in action is Yoga.)  
Performance of an action with selfless attitude, with an attitude of

\* स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ भ. गी. १८. ४६ ॥

Having worshipped Him by his actions, a man gains perfection.

service is the real skill in action. 'Skill in action is Yoga,' is a very misunderstood statement because more often than not we are told, 'More you work, better a Karmayogi you are.' Means a man who works for twenty hours a day is a greater Karmayogi than the one who works sixteen hours a day and he in turn is better than the one who works twelve hours a day. Doing many actions for a length of time is not Karmayoga. It is not even the skill in performance of action. Karmayoga is merely an attitude of offering the action to the Lord and that is the real purpose of action.

I may decide to perform a selfless action. But then I immediately get worried; what will happen to my wife and children? What will happen to my job and my position? I think that selflessness is not for a householder. Selflessness is not for a man in the world. It is for Sannyāsis and who have nothing to bother about because they are looked after by others!

Who can become selfless? A Sannyāsi can become selfless because his self is taken care of by somebody. He is assured that his food is already arranged and therefore he need not worry. This freedom from action comes by the assurance that nothing is going to happen to me. The freedom comes from the assurance that even if I give, I am not going to lose anything, because what I am giving doesn't really belong to me. This flower was given to me by somebody and I pass it on to someone else, I don't know where it came from. I am just passing it on. And there is a joy of giving because I know I am not losing anything. The thing does not belong to me to begin with, and it is given by somebody. So I can easily give it away. When all my worries, all my anxieties go away, then alone I am going to understand or I am able to discover the joy of giving. When I am assured of the future, when the anxieties for the future go away from my mind, it is very easy for me to become selfless. When my mind is worried about the next moment it is not possible for me to be selfless.

Selflessness can only be implemented by the one who has discovered the freedom from anxieties. Until then, the selfish actions are quite natural. Only the one who is not worried about tomorrow

can be selfless. This thing is possible if you become a Sādhū and have no worries for future or if you have discovered from your experiences that you are never left hungry and that you indeed have been getting all you need. Then you can become selfless. This fact is to be discovered in life.

Everybody, in fact is a Sannyāsi because everything is given to him. When I was born, everything was provided to me. At what time in life was I not provided with what was needed? Every time, whatever I needed has been provided. I just do not make note of this fact. This fact has to be realised. From my own experiences I have to discover that I am already secured. Who has been looking after me all these years? Who has given me the body? Who has given me the intellect? Who has given me all these abilities? Who has provided me with various opportunities? Who has given me the education? Who has given me all these things? Have I brought them with me? There is nothing that I brought with me. I came just empty handed. I didn't even decide to come. I was sent here. I had no strength at all. I didn't even have a speck of knowledge. I haven't produced a single thing.

This understanding of life is given by Vedānta. Even the strength or courage to try to serve the world requires a certain amount of assurance because man always wants safety. When I am secure, it is easy for me to help others. As long as I am insecure, I cannot help other insecure people. Beggars cannot give. Even social service, political service or any kind of service is not possible by those who are themselves hungry or insecure. The man who is hungry in the body, but rich in spirit can give away thing but those who are hungry or poor in spirit cannot give anything. The material wealth is not the criterion of the richness, the criterion is the richness of the spirit.

Duryodhana could not give anything but Karna could give everything because he was rich in spirit. So we have to discover this fact merely by observing our life. योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम्, I take care of Yoga and Kṣema is His promise, and He is indeed very sincere in fulfilling His promise. Until I discover this fact of life, until I

develop enough freedom or strength in me to give, my attitude would be one of taking, of acquiring. Till then my actions will not be selfless. We do not say that everybody should start performing selfless actions. It is not even possible. Only the one who has discovered that freedom, that assurance, who has no worries about future and who does not bother about the little self, he alone can do that. Normally everyone is very much scared of leaving the security, very much scared of giving up things, of being generous, lest he be exploited by people. Fear of being exploited means hesitation in giving. As long as this thing is there, as long as I am not secure, as long as fear and lot of demands and requirements are there in life, what should be done? The Lord says, 'Don't worry.' Then also you can perform action with the Yoga attitude. Perform action for yourself, for whatever you want and accept the results as they come without reacting. Maintain a balance in both success and failure. सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा...॥ भ., गी. २-४८ ॥ (maintaining equanimity in success and failure...).

Accept all the results, both success and failure as Prasāda or the blessing of the Lord. Slowly and slowly that will bring about an understanding that there is no such thing as failure. Whatever comes to me, comes as a blessing of the Lord to help me, to enrich me. Then I will be able to maintain a balance or equanimity under different conditions and see how every situation, whether favourable or otherwise has something to offer me. I become sensitive to that factor and become less and less concerned about the nature of result or situation. I discover the Prasāda or blessing of the Lord everywhere. That will bring about a sense of security in me. My heart will become more and more generous, will have the capacity to give out little by little, will become more and more selfless. My heart expands, not physically but it becomes generous. I become large-hearted. Selfless actions become easier and easier and my life becomes one of serving the Lord constantly.

If I want to see God, I must tune up with Him, I must try to become like Him. If He is all pervading, I must also try to become all pervading. Then alone can I see Him. Then alone can



there be a harmony and happiness. So the first step in Karmayoga is that as long as I have selfish motives, as long as I don't have the courage to part with what belongs to me, I continue to perform desire-prompted actions for acquiring things in life. But still I relate to the Lord. Lord is the one who gives me the results. Lord is the one who has been giving everything that I have in life. Appreciation of this fact assures me that Lord will give me what I need. I develop courage, I develop generosity, I develop large-heartedness. In due course my selfish attitudes, my negative tendencies, likes and dislikes which I have gathered over a long time start getting purged. Then joy, cheerfulness, freedom are experienced by me slowly but surely. And ultimately the knowledge that I am all free takes place, which is the goal of life.

To discover the immortality is the goal of life. The notion on my part that I am mortal, that I am limited is the obstacle that denies me the immortality that is my nature. How can I give up that notion? By serving the Lord, by serving the world with a selfless attitude. To give up that notion, We have to develop strength and courage which we don't have at the moment. The insecurity that I feel is because of the lack of courage. The Upaniṣad itself says:

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः । मुं. उ. ३-२-४.

(The Self is not gained by men weak in body; mind and intellect or spirit). A weak man cannot acquire Ātmā, cannot acquire anything in life. A certain amount of strength is required. We are not talking about the strength that comes from physical exercises. Even that is necessary to a certain extent. A physically weak man cannot sit, cannot listen, cannot see properly. So it is very difficult for him to accomplish anything in life. Certain basic physical strength is required, but the strength that here we are talking about is the strength and the courage that comes from the building up of the character, that comes from the discovery of freedom. That strength is Vīryam or Balam, which becomes necessary to discover the self. To cultivate this strength from within, the strength of the character, the integrity of the mind, a stepwise programme is given to us.

### Practical Vedānta—Values of life

The strength or the integrity of the mind is developed by implementing the values in life, the values that Lord Kṛṣṇa talks about in the XIII chapter of Bhagavad Gītā. Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forgiveness, uprightness, truthfulness, etc. These values should be practised in life. A life based on these values helps us see the inner harmony. Right now my mind is shattered because of the conflicts, as a result of which I have no courage to be free from the future anxieties. First of all we have to develop a mind which is integrated. Integration of head and heart is the first step to have an integrated personality, for which Tyāga or renunciation of the false and owing up of the real is very important. Values are recommended in order to develop the strength for the ultimate achievement of the immortality in life. Even ordinary achievements in life, like wealth and name and fame, are also not possible for a man with shattered personality then what to talk of immortality !

Before I become God, it is necessary for me to become a human being by eliminating negative tendencies or the animalism in me. I am not even a human being today—a lot of animal instincts, a lot of selfish tendencies are residing in my heart. They create conflicts in me and ultimately make me a shattered personality. Implementation of values in life is the first step of practical Vedānta.

The vision viz. Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mithyā, when implemented in life becomes values such as truthfulness, non-injury non-stealing, honesty, straightforwardness, simplicity and so on. All these values are nothing but the Truth implemented in life, since absence of these values create conflict in me. Thus we come to the 'Relevance of Śāṅkara Vedānta in present practical life.'

Normally we do not think that Vedānta is relevant or that these values are relevant or practical in our life. It is our common experience that a person who is honest is the one who suffers. It is our experience that a man who speaks truth is the one who

\* अमानिस्त्वम् अदम्भित्वम् अहिंसा क्षान्तिः आर्जवम्... । भ. गी. १३-७

loses his job or business. The one who doesn't hurt anybody is the one who is hurt the most. It seems to be our experience that implementing these values recommended by Vedānta go against as though, the very aspirations of life or the very goal of life. It seems to us that the values bring about a loss and not a gain in life. This is our common conclusion, our common cry and therefore today we find so much dishonesty and corruption everywhere.

In fact nobody likes dishonesty. Nobody likes corruption. Nobody likes falsehood. Even the greatest of the liars doesn't want somebody else to lie to him. He also tests his partner whether he speaks truth or not. Even a man who hurts many others, doesn't want himself to be hurt by others. The one who can kill and destroy people right and left doesn't want to be destroyed himself. The fellow who is dishonest, expects honesty from others. A man who is indulging, who is smoking and drinking and doing all kinds of things, doesn't want his son to drink or indulge. Really, in his heart he doesn't like it.

I love service also. Don't I like if somebody serves me? Don't I feel happy if somebody feeds me? This shows that I have a value for service. If somebody is hungry, he also will be happy if I feed him. Everybody knows what the basic values of life are. It is not to be told to anybody because everybody loves these things of his own.

This alone points out an important thing in life. That I do not want to be hurt shows that I have a value for non-injury or Ahimsā. That I don't like anybody else lying to me or being dishonest to me shows my love for truthfulness, love for honesty. And that I have a love for all these things shows that it is my nature.

आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति । (बृ. उ. ४-५-६)

(Everything is dear to me because the Self is dear to me). Ātmā or the Self alone is the dearest thing to me. I love truthfulness which means truthfulness must be my nature. I love non-injury means non-injury must be my nature.

Then why does a man lie? If he basically loves truth, how come he compromises truth in his life? If he basically loves non-

injury, how does he injure other people? Why? Why is this conflict there in the life of an average man?

Falsehood is against the very grain of my life. Injury and corruption or dishonesty is against the very nature of mine and that is the reason why every time I speak lie there is a conflict in my mind. Every time I am dishonest, there is a conflict in my mind. Every time I hurt somebody there is a conflict in my mind. Nobody can escape conflict by hurting others. We know many professionals who kill people and nothing happens to them. What all we can say for them is that they have become totally insensitive, animals. We are talking about human beings. People who have fallen down to the category of animals, who have become totally insensitive or stones, they need not be discussed here. We are talking about relatively sensitive people. No sensitive man will be able to stand untruth because it goes against the very nature. Everybody knows without exception, what the truth is—we are talking about practical truth. We are here, not talking about the ultimate Truth. We are talking about the truth in our day to day life. What is the right thing, that everybody knows from his point of view, and whenever he has to compromise, whenever he has to speak false or lie, that lie is only out of helplessness. It is not because he likes it.

No man is dishonest by his choice. A man is dishonest only because he is helpless. He doesn't know how to be honest. We must have sympathy for these people, because they are dishonest out of helplessness; He has not developed the strength and the courage to be honest and so he is dishonest. Dishonesty is the sign of weakness, not of strength. Fallacy is not the sign of strength, hurting others is not the sign of strength. It is the sign of weakness. So in order to discover the real strength that is my nature, I must follow these values. I must get over the instincts of being dishonest, instincts of compromising with the values of life.

A man compromises the values because he has not understood the purpose of the values, the place of values in achievement of what he wants in life. Purpose of life is to attain the limitless. Purpose

of life is to attain the state of Saccidānanda, or to abide in my nature. The purpose of life is to gain lasting happiness. And when do I feel happy? Only when there is a harmony or peace in my mind. A mind in conflict cannot be a happy mind. So what we want in life—we must settle first. Do I want happiness? Do I want harmony? Do I want peace and quietude in my mind? Happiness or harmony or peace are just other names for truthfulness, non-injury, etc. and so by compromising the values of life for the sake of happiness, I am denying the very thing I am seeking. Because we do not know this, our values are all mixed up.

As a child grows, he picks up so many values. A child goes to a shopping centre with mother and there he demands a chocolate, a thing that he cannot demand at home. In the shopping centre the mother doesn't want to create an unpleasant scene and so the child quietly takes advantage of the situation. He repeatedly asks the shopkeeper to give him a chocolate. The shopkeeper looks at the mother. Mother says: 'O.k. Give him a chocolate.' The shopkeeper gives him the chocolate. The child registers the whole process in his mind. The mother opens her purse and pays money for the chocolate. This also gets registered in the mind of the child. He comes across similar incidents and he concludes that money buys chocolate. As he grows older information gets added to his mind, he finds that money buys not only chocolate, it also buys balloons and all the various toys and then books, pencils and so on. At home also when he plays with money, which is an ordinary piece of paper according to him, the mother says, 'It is Money. Don't play.' And she takes away that coloured paper and keeps it in her purse. Thus slowly the child gathers, picks up a value for money indirectly. He concludes that money buys everything. Not only that but nothing buys like money.

A child finds his father getting away with anything and everything because of his position. His father is a manager. He sees the peons coming home, and doing different household chores. The clerks also visit his father occasionally and bring sweets and toys for the children. So he develops a value for power. Actually the child wants to command. But he finds that only a powerful

man can get things done and therefore he develops a value for power. He develops a value for being flattered, for being praised.

Thus as I observe the life, I pick up these values. Basically the value is only for happiness but I think that happiness comes only when there is money, power, position. And thus the value for happiness gets converted or transferred into the value for money, value for power, value for position.

Really speaking, nobody is interested in power. Nobody is interested in position. Nobody is interested in money. Everybody is interested only in happiness, harmony, peace within. But unfortunately in the process of growing up, in the process of observing the world, in the process of observing the functions in the family and the society, man picks up wrong values. When father is at home and somebody wants to talk to him on telephone, he tells the son, 'Say that the father is not at home.' The son conveys the message. He finds father doing wrong things and getting away with them and so he also develops a value for getting away by telling lies. Everybody wants to get away and so lie becomes a common practice, dishonesty becomes a common practice, whereas really the value is for happiness. So I have to decide now whether I want happiness or I want the other paraphernalia viz. wealth, progeny or other achievements, the Artha, Kāma and Dharma. Nobody wants these three Puruṣārthas. What everybody wants is Amṛtatvam, the immortality, the lasting happiness. Should we then not work directly for happiness instead of acquiring it through wealth, power etc?

It was different when I was working for money. Now that I want to work for happiness, the attitude altogether changes. Now the criterion in making choices is different. I should choose an action which can make me happier. At the moment I choose the actions that can make me wealthier, mightier. Now I no more make such a choice. Now while making a choice, I ask this question, 'What will make me happier?' and I discover in course of time that Satya, Truth alone makes me happier. It may or may not bring me money. It may or may not bring me name and

fame. It may or may not bring me power and position. But it certainly brings for me happiness, tranquility, harmony within, which is what I want. If getting the wealth means sacrificing the harmony, then who wants that wealth? Wealth for the sake of wealth, progeny for the sake of progeny or action for the sake of action do not bring about harmony. They do have a purpose but it is indirect, in getting me happiness. I may acquire all of them—action, progeny, wealth, but not for myself; for serving others. So they do become relevant in life. A seeker may acquire wealth; he need not give it up. If he has talent, if he has some ability he should employ them in work and acquire as much as he can. But he uses it for charity, for service because these noble deeds purify the individual. As the Lord says in Bhagavad Gītā :

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।

यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ॥ भ. गी. १८-५ ॥

(Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed; worship, charity, and also austerity are the purifiers of even the 'wise').

Charity (दान) is a great value. For giving I must earn and for earning I must work. So work is for earning, earning is for giving; and by giving I get real joy. Yajña (यज्ञ) means sacrifice. When an action is performed in the spirit of service to the Lord, of service to the society, it becomes a Yajña. Tapas (तपः) means a life of self-control, a life of minimum consumption for myself and maximum service to the society. When the life is based on Yajña, Dāna and Tapas, I get rid of the impurities, the conflicts.

When I have a value for speaking truth and not for money, then I am able to speak truth, but both money as well as truth may not go together. Today our value for money, power, position, etc. is an assimilated value, whereas the value for values such as truthfulness, non-injury, etc. is only half-baked. As long as I can speak truth and also get money, I don't mind being truthful. But as soon as the value for truthfulness comes in conflict with my value of getting money, I easily compromise truth for the sake.

of money. So at the moment my value for the values and the resulting joy which it is supposed to create in my heart, is contaminated by the value for wealth and achievements and I am not able to get the real taste of the values as such. And for that mixed taste, I blame the values, not having understood their value, their real nature, their original taste, like the ant of the salt-fields.

An ant living in the salt-fields had a friend who lived in a sugar-field. The sugar-field ant was very fat and healthy, because she got all the sugar she wanted, while the other ant had to sustain her body with salt, the only available food. So she was very weak and miserable. These two ants had a communication with each other. Once the sugar-field-ant wrote, 'I am enjoying here in the sugar-fields. I am in the heavens'. The other one replied to her, 'Please tell me also what makes you so happy. I am in the hell here.' So the sugar-field-ant invited the salt-mine-ant to her place and the salt-mine-ant went to visit her friend at the sugar-field. The hostess-ant started feeding the guest-ant. Everyday from morning till evening the guest was eating sugar but somehow her weight did not increase. She was as thin and weak as before.

So one day the host-ant asked the guest-ant,

'What is the problem? You are eating sugar since so many days and still how come your weight does not increase? You are not putting on weight at all! Let us go to a doctor and have a physical check-up.'

They went to a doctor. The doctor-ant asked the patient-ant to open her mouth. With a battery she observed the mouth well from inside and she discovered something in the mouth. What was it? The guest-ant had kept a piece of salt inside her mouth! She had brought some salt with her from the salt-field and even while eating sugar, she always kept a salt particle in her mouth. And therefore the taste that she always got even from sugar was of salt. The sugar was denied by the salt!

I also want to eat sugar in life. I love Satya, I like honesty, I have a value for non-injury; but I do not want to give up the salt in the form of the fascination for money, fascination for power



and position, fascination for achievements and accomplishments. Alongwith that I want the sugar of truthfullness, non-injury etc. I am mixing up the two. But that does not work. The value for values gets contaminated by the other values. I love truth, but unfortunately I also entertain the values which are opposed to truth and therefore there arises a conflict. Nobody can speak truth in life unless this ultimate vision is there, this exalted vision is there; that I have got everything I need. This is the vision of Vedānta.

Vedānta teaches us that Jīve is Brahman indeed and nothing else. I am already Brahman, the limitless and so there should be no reason for me to acquire anything. The value should be for the values. If it requires sacrifice, which can be only of worldly things, or of my wrong notions or of negative tendencies, I must be prepared for it. I want to speak truth, but if I cannot sacrifice my value for money, speaking truth is not possible. I want to be honest but if I cannot sacrifice my value for getting a position, honesty is not possible.

Speaking truth requires giving up the false. Honesty requires giving up the dishonesty. Non-injury requires giving up the injury. This requires courage, preparedness for sacrifice. Otherwise the conclusions would be like the following :

‘Svāmiji, look ! I was honest and I didn’t get promotion.’

‘Svāmiji ! I didn’t tell lie and I was transferred.’

‘Yes, One has to be prepared for that. Am I prepared ? If I am not, it means I work for wealth. But then happiness that is my own nature, is denied. Being truthful does not mean I will be necessarily deprived of wealth. Wealth comes to me not because I speak false. Wealth comes to me for altogether a different reason.

### Law of Karma

Another important vision of life that Vedānta gives us is that what comes to me is on the account of the actions that I have done before. Results are always in keeping with the actions that I perform. We find many dishonest people to be wealthy and prosperous. We find many, who compromise with the values, are at

top positions. What they have accomplished or achieved is not because they are dishonest. Again someone is miserable not because he is honest and speaks truth. We must know how to correlate the cause and effect.

In villages they use storage bins for storing grains and preserving for the whole year. The grains are added from an opening at the top and are taken out from another opening at the bottom. Whatever grain comes from the field depending upon the season, is dumped in the bin. If rice comes, it is dumped first in the bin. Then wheat, barley, bajari etc. are dumped on the top of rice, as they come. There are different layers of grains in that storage bin.

When I happened to go to a village, I saw one man filling barley in the bin. But when he opened the opening at the bottom, what he got was rice! In another place I saw a man adding wheat from the top and getting jowar at the bottom. I was surprised. How is it that what one gets is altogether different from what he is seen adding? There seems to be no relationship between the two.

One man gets rice, although presently he is seen dumping bajari, because he had stored rice earlier. And jowar that the other man gets is also because he had put it there first. He will definitely get what he puts in now when the right time comes. Cause and effect do not always happen simultaneously. So we may not be able to correlate two events. The effect takes a certain time for materialising and therefore if I want only rice from the bin, I must store only rice. If I have stored some other useless things or pebbles, I cannot expect rice. A man who leads a life of Dharma, a life of values, is certainly going to get appropriate result in due course. What he seems to be getting now is due to what he has done in the past.

This again requires Śraddhā, a courage of conviction and that is why the total vision is necessary. There must be Śraddhā in the whole system, in justice, in impartiality; that if I do something good, bad cannot come to me. This is the simple law of cause-

and effect or the law of Karma. I must do good actions today in order that in future I can get good results.

Those who are dishonest and corrupt and are still powerful they probably have done something good in the past for which they are reaping the results today. And what they are doing today, they will have to reap in future. Actually it is no concern of ours whether they suffer or not or get bad results or not. But we should know for sure, for our sake that the good, the happiness comes only from good actions, from a life of Dharma. Happiness comes only from righteousness. So Vedānta gives a lot of importance to these values. They help me develop an inner strength and conviction that nothing wrong will happen.

What can happen to the ocean if I add a few buckets of water to it or take away a few buckets of water from it? Let people take away buckets and buckets full of water from me, the ocean. After all what can they take away? If I speak truth, they will exploit me. So what? What is meant by exploitation? What can I lose? I cannot lose myself. Ātmā or the immortality can never be lost. And what can be lost is of no consequence at all. In fact I want to lose the things that are not in my nature. In a way they are taking away all the negative tendencies from me, leaving me a purified individual. Purity can come only by giving up impurities. So in our life we should be giving up things. That requires strength and courage. And it comes from the understanding of this basic vision of life: Jīva, the individual is Brahman. I am indeed limitless. I am immortal. Therefore I need not worry about seeking anything. Who will look after my wife and children? Lord will look after them. That does not mean that I have to give up my responsibilities in life. Responsibility is not opposed to immortality. Action is not opposed to immortality. Life need not change. I need not start walking on my head in order to implement this vision of Vedānta. I can very well continue walking on my feet. Nothing unusual has to happen. People do not know what they want. That is why all sorts of funny things exist in the name of religion and spirituality. In meditation everyone wants some unusual experience. We don't have to try for something unusual because 'I' am the

most usual thing. Brahman is spotless indeed and equal, निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म । That which is contaminated and qualified is not Brahman.

Vedānta is not for acquiring Siddhis also. It is for getting rid of things. Man is blessed with an intellect, with an ability to implement this vision in life. Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithyā is the vision. Jagat is unreal which means it is not of any consequence. A few buckets of water here and there do not matter at all to the ocean. That is why Jagat is called Mithyā. Not that it is non-existent but it cannot add anything in me, nor can it take away anything from me for I am full, free, independent, self-sufficient.

### Renunciation (त्याग)

I cannot walk freely as long as I hold on to crutches. A child cannot walk freely if it does not want to give up its perambulator. This attitude of dependence on supports and crutches has to be given up. When can the child walk on its own legs? The day when he develops the courage to give up the perambulator. Then alone can he discover and develop strength in his legs.

Tyāga, renunciation begins right from the childhood and even before that. As a child I do not want to give up. I want to hold on to the perambulator. But what does the mother do? A clever mother quietly takes away the support and leaves the child on its own; she is no doubt watching the child from a distance. In course of time the child develops the balance, and the strength because they are potentially there. There is strength in the legs so it can be discovered. There is balance in the personality therefore it can be discovered. The discovery is always of a thing that is already there. Walking is the privilege of the child, but it was denied to it so long as it was dependent on the perambulator. We in our life also are dependent on all sorts of crutches and perambulators such as action, wealth, progeny and acquisitions and achievements. We see security and safety in them and so never discover it from within. Give up those crutches, and own up the freedom, independence that is your nature.

A man happens to meet with an accident and develops fractures

in hands and legs. He lies in bed with his hands and legs hanging in awkward positions. Eventually to gain the ability to walk, he has to discover the strength from within. Nobody can give it to him from without. Even the doctors cannot do it. He has to practise the movements of hands and legs everyday. After many days of practice, he is slowly able to lift his hands. In the same way he has to practise with his legs. He has to do certain exercises. It is only then that he discovers enough strength in his own hands and legs.

That strength is regained because it is potentially there in the limbs. I do not have to give up my hands and legs, only the crutches are to be given up. This must be well understood. Nobody can lose anything that is his nature, that intrinsically belongs to him. There can be no loss at all in life. What I am asked to renounce is only what does not belong to me.

My requirements are infinite. My begging bowl is a bottomless pit, which the world has no capacity to fill. Stop asking for things. Start giving things. Then we will discover the treasure that we have, the wealth that we possess. Unless I start distributing, I will not discover it. Once I start giving, renouncing, I discover the limitless that I have. I possess an infinite inner wealth. I start using it for others, I discover its abundance. As long as I am busy taking and acquiring, I do not come to know what potential I have.

This is the message of Vedānta, that every human being, every individual is blessed with the privilege of gaining the immortality, of gaining the limitless. Everybody is qualified. Everybody has the potential. All that is necessary to be done is to give up the beggarly attitude. That I need something other than me to be complete—this false dependence and wrong notion is to be given up. Thus renunciation is the vision of life. It is an outlook of life and by that outlook, I slowly and slowly gain the inner strength and become independent of the crutches which I have been holding on. And it necessarily requires following values in our life.

In case of Bhagavān Rāmacandrajī a simple thing like keeping the words of His father required Him to give up the kingdom and

to stay in the forest for 14 years. In fact everyone, all the citizens and the family including the father wished He should not leave Ayodhyā. But Bhagavān Rāma didn't do so, because what mattered to Him was following the values even at the cost of sacrificing the whole kingdom.

To Naciketā, his father said, 'I have given you to Yama (Lord Death.) Immediately the child went to Lord Death, to keep his father's words.

We are not asked to do any of these things lucky as we are. But we must be prepared for whatever sacrifice that is needed because nothing comes cheap even in the material world. Don't think that immortality, joy or harmony can come just for nothing. Giving up all the false things is the price paid for immortality. As long as even the slightest falsehood is there, as long as the slightest of this beggarly attitude is there, so long the immortality cannot be owned up. The strength to renounce comes from this very understanding.

Suppose a beggar is told, 'Hey! You are a millionaire.' Why do you worry? You own a big treasure, don't you know? Just dig under that tree in your back-yard and you will find it! Even this knowledge that 'I possess the treasure' eliminates the beggar from him. He knows now that he is a rich man but no doubt he still has to dig out the treasure. Some effort has to be made to own that richness, but the beggarliness does not remain with him.

This knowledge should first of all eliminate beggarliness from me. In course of time the richness will be discovered as I dig it out from my heart. The obstruction of Rāga and Dveṣa, likes and dislikes is there. But underneath, the Amṛtatvam is hidden. All we have to do is to eliminate the obstacle, eliminate the dirt of likes and dislikes and the treasure which is our very nature will open up for us.

### **Universal harmony**

Vedānta is nothing but harmonising the infinite potential that I have within me. With Śraddhā when I follow the values, I

develop the joy in giving, sacrificing or renouncing. Then as my actions become less and less self-centered and more and more directed towards the Lord, my life becomes a worship of the Lord.

ईश्वरार्पितं नेच्छया कृतम् ।

चित्तशोधकं मुक्तिसाधकम् ॥ ६॥ उपदेशसारम् ॥

(Action dedicated to the Lord and done without desire purifies the mind and thus becomes the means for liberation). By service offered to the Lord, the mind becomes pure. It becomes the right instrument for seeing the Lord. For the realisation of Ātmā, the means we are given are body, speech and mind. All these should be dedicated to the Lord. Then worship is not a particular action. Any action can become the worship of the Lord. Worship is not an action, worship is an attitude. So all I have to do is to develop or cultivate the attitude of giving and serving, an attitude of love and worship to the Lord. Then every action becomes Arcanā, an offering to the Lord. There develops a rapport with the Lord. And then I discover the harmony that I failed to see till now. I discover the harmony both without and within which in turn results in the discovery that harmony without (Brahman) is harmony within (Ātmā). This is the identity between Brahman and Jīva.

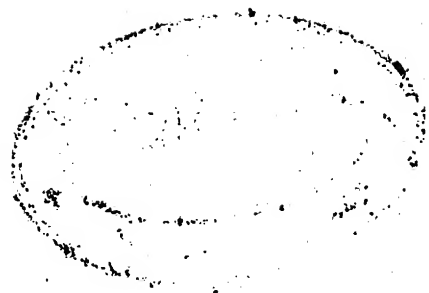
This vision of Vedānta alone is the practical thing in life. Everything else is impractical. What we consider to be the practical life, is absolutely an impractical one because there is a conflict at every moment. This conflict is drain in my personality. What is practical for the river? The only practical thing for the river is to meet the ocean. If the river foolishly tries to go up the mountain or to remain there, it is an impractical thing. This is exactly what we are trying to do. Whenever we compromise our values, we go against our very nature, and therefore conflicts result. Life of acquiring and achieving, holding and aggrandising is against my nature. Life of dependence is against my nature and therefore there are conflicts.

The life devoid of values, that I am living today is actually an impractical life. The life that is dedicated to the attainment of

this vision, alone is the practical life. One who lives this practical life, alone would have the satisfaction of having attained or fulfilled the purpose of his life. Thus to the extent I have integrated my personality, to the extent I have discovered that harmony within and without, to the extent I have discovered the freedom, to that extent I am successful in life. This should be the criterion of measuring success in life. The purpose of life is to discover the harmony and so my life must be moulded, must be channelised in a way that it enables me to discover the goal of my life.

Thus all the way, at all the levels when this vision of Vedānta is translated into the practical life of values of Karmayoga, of worship to the Lord, it leads me to the knowledge of immortality and enables me to own up the immortality that is my own nature, that is my privilege.





ગુજરાત યુનિવર્સિટીની અભ્યાસેતર પ્રવૃત્તિઓની યોજના હેઠળ  
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નોંધ.—યુનિવર્સિટી વેચાણ કેન્દ્ર પર જે તે પુસ્તકની કિંમત+જરૂરી  
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